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VIET NAM GENERATION

A Journal of Recent History and Contemporary Culture



Volume 6, Numbers 3-4

CONTENTS

VIET NAM GENERATION

VOLUME 6, NUMBERS 3-4

INTRODUCTION	2	CREATING AN ILLUSION: MIA TEXTS, by TONY WILLIAMS	89
IN THIS ISSUE		25 YEARS AGO: U.S. TROOPS REBEL IN HAWAII, by ELLEN PIERCE	95
GRAPHIC ARTS		THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND DURING THE 1960s, by PETER B. LEVY	96
STATE OF THE JOURNAL		TAKES ON NATURE: THREE U.S. PERSPECTIVES FROM THE VIET NAM WAR, by MARGARET E. STEWART	107
SIXTIES GENERATIONS CONFERENCE		BRING YOUR LUNCH, by HORACE COLEMAN	114
SIXTIES-L ELECTRONIC DISCUSSION LIST		POETRY by CONSTANCE PULTZ	121
A NOTE FROM STEVE		POETRY by PAUL ALLEN	123
NEW LEFT, NEW RIGHT, NEW WORLD, by PAUL LYONS	6	POETRY by JOHN WILSON	125
"DID YOU SAY THAT MR. DEAN ACHESON IS A PINK?": THE WALKER CASE AND THE COLD WAR., by SHAWN FRANCIS PETERS	12	"CHALE CON LA DRAFT": CHICANA/O ANTIWAR WRITINGS, by GEORGE MARISCAL	126
THE MYTH OF THE SPAT-UPON VIETNAM VETERAN AND THE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOLDIERS AS MEANS AND ENDS IN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR, by JERRY LEE LEMBCKE	24	POETRY by DAVID L. ERBEN	132
PAC MAN, PATRIOTS, AND THE HIGH-TECH POST BABY-BOOM POSTMODERN CULTURE, by BEN ARNETTE	36	POETRY by CAROLE TEN BRINK	132
UNCOVERING THE DEATHWISH: ABSURDISM IN <i>DR. STRANGELOVE</i> , by DAVID SEED	53	THE POWER OF CULTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILIZATION (THE CASE OF VIET NAM), by HOANG NGOC HIEN	133
<i>DR. STRANGELOVE</i> , by DAVID L. ERBEN	60	A COMPILATION OF SURVEY RESULTS ON THE JOB PLACEMENTS OF VIETNAMESE AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN MINORITIES VIA THE GAIN PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS, by CATHERINE BISCHERL	145
"MAN-MADE WEATHER": MEDIA, MURDER, AND THE FUTURE IN <i>NATURAL BORN KILLERS</i> , by CYNTHIA FUCHS	62	FAMILY, by JOHN SHAW	148
POETRY by ANDRENA ZAWINSKI	69	RED DELICIOUS, by JOHN GOLDFINE	150
BASIL T. PAQUET'S VIETNAM WAR POETRY AND THE AMERICAN FASCINATION WITH TECHNOLOGY, by RANDY FERTEL	71	POETRY by DAN DUFFY	152
THE HELICOPTER ROAD TO VIETNAM, by PETER BRUSH	77	POETRY by LEO CONNELLAN	153
CANONICITY, by N. BRADLEY CHRISTIE	81	SHAKESPEARE IN THE SANDS, by STEVEN GROSS	155
THE SURREAL JOURNEYS AWAY FROM WAR OF WOLFGANG BORCHERT AND TIM O'BRIEN, by RENNY CHRISTOPHER	83	WAITING FOR YANK RACHELL, by DAVID L. WILLSON	159

POETRY by JEAN C. SULLIVAN	159
POETRY by D.C. ANDERSON	160
POETRY by THOMAS A. GRIBBLE	161
LIFE ON THE EDGE OF A WAR ZONE, by JOHN W. WILLIAMS	162
POETRY by EDWARD C. LYNKEY	166
POETRY by R.S. CARLSON	166
YESTERDAY I SWAM AT CHINA BEACH, by IRENE GOLDMAN	168
POETRY by ALVAH K. HOWE	171
POETRY by THERESA A. WILLIAMS	173
POETRY by CHARLES SCOTT	174
THE VIETNAM VETERAN'S MEMORIAL, by MARK FOGARTY	175
BECOMING THE OTHER, by Phil JASON	177
MISS SAIGON: THE RETURN OF ALDEN PYLE, Kim WORTHY	179
POETRY by CAROL CATANZARITI	181
POETRY by RON GERMUNDSON	182
SKY FRONT: VIET NAM TAKES TO THE AIR, by ALAN FARRELL	183
TWENTY YEARS LATER AND NO CHANGE, by JAMES Y. SIMMS	186
CANCER YEAR, REVIEWED by DAN DUFFY	188
ACHILLES IN VIETNAM: AUTHOR'S REPLY TO W.D. EHRHART	189
W.D. EHRHART WRITES IN	191
ACHILLES IN VIETNAM, REVIEWED by ALAN FARRELL	192
HOTSPUR IN MASSACHUSETTS: THE PROBLEM WITH ACHILLES IN VIETNAM, by PHOEBE SPINRAD	193
POETRY by MAGGIE JAFFE	197

INTRODUCTION

IN THIS ISSUE

I'm proud to present the latest in a series of issues of *Viet Nam Generation*. Volume 6 was, I think, our best year yet (though Volume 7 will definitely give it a run for its money). A great deal of the material published in this issue was collected at the 1994 *Sixties Generations Conference: From Montgomery to Viet Nam*, held in November at Western Connecticut State University. More of the papers presented at that conference will appear in Volume 7, and since we are holding our third annual *Sixties Generations Conference* on October 5-8, 1995, I anticipate a regular flow of fine publications from that source. We also have our strongest set of contributions from Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American writers. The translation and publication costs of these contributions were funded by a generous grant from the Ford Foundation to support *Viet Nam Generation's* work and to strengthen our linkages with Viet Nam. As many of you know, my editorial partner Dan Duffy has spent the last six months in Ha Noi working with Vietnamese intellectuals and writers and gathering manuscripts. Translations from Vietnamese and literature by Vietnamese will be regularly featured in all of our upcoming journal issues.

I can't seem to resist opening an issue with a Paul Lyons essay. This one is called "New Left, New Right, New World," and its rather frightening analysis of contemporary political culture sets the tone for our interdisciplinary and wildly varied collection of essays, articles, poetry, narrative and reviews. Shawn Francis Peters follows Lyons with a study of Cold War paranoia, "Did You Say That Mr. Dean Acheson is a Pink?" Jerry Lembke follows on Peters heels with a sobering analysis of the connection between the Gulf war and the revisionary history of the Viet Nam war. A natural follow-up to Lembke, Ben Arnette's "Pac Man, Patriots, and the High-Tech Post Baby-Boom Postmodern Culture" chillingly portrays the effect of video culture on human perception.

It seems that *Dr. Strangelove* has come back in fashion. We have a fine analysis of the film by David Seed, and our contributing editor, David Erben, also chose Kubrick's dark comedy for the focus of his column. I paired these essays with Cynthia Fuchs's remarkable essay, "Man-Made Weather": Media, Murder and the Future in *Natural Born Killers*," which leaves us with the impression that Stone has picked up where Kubrick left off. A break between this section and the next is created with Andrea Zawinski's cinematic poem, "You get the picture, America."

Randy Fertel's essay, "Basil T. Paquet's Vietnam War Poetry and the American Fascination with Technology," serves to remind us of the existence of an early and important Viet Nam war poet. It also resonates to the technocentricity referred to by Arnette in his essay above. Further playing out the theme of technowar, Fertel is followed by contributing editor Peter Brush, whose "The

Helicopter Road to Vietnam" gives us a history of the techno-symbol of the Viet Nam war. Bradley Christie, in his first column as contributing editor, writes about "Canonicity" and begins the work of describing the development of the newest manifestation of Viet Nam war studies. Contributing editor Renny Christopher then fires yet another shot at the canon in her controversial and intelligent article, "The Surreal Journeys Away from War of Wolfgang Borchert and Tim O'Brien." Christopher is followed by contributing editor Tony Williams, who tackles four MLA texts in his provocative review essay, "Creating an Illusion." And Ellen Pierce reminds us that "25 Years Ago: U.S. Troops Rebel in Hawaii." Peter B. Levy follows with a substantial study of "The Civil Rights Movement in Cambridge, Maryland during the 1960s." Margaret Stewart writes about U.S. perceptions of Nature in representations of the Viet Nam war. Poet Horace Coleman (whose volume, *In the Grass*, should be in print by the time you are reading this issue, from Viet Nam Generation, Inc.) presents us with a strong personal essay on race and culture.

Three poets provide thoughtful reflections the civil rights movement and other events: Constance Pultz, Paul Allen, and John Wilson. George Mariscal gives us a written version of the fine paper he presented at the 1994 MLA, "*Chale con la draft*: Chicana/o Antiwar Writings," and includes some stunning and hard-to-find graphics in his text. David Erben give us a poem about Wounded Knee and Carol Ten Brink follows with a poem about the 20th Century. Hoang Ngoc Hien takes us someplace entirely different in "The Power of Culture and the Development of Civilization," and Catherine Bischel leads us from Vietnamese history to current conditions in the Vietnamese-American community in a description of her survey of job placement of Vietnamese and Southeast Asian minorities.

We've got two stories about Vietnamese-American children. "Family," by John Shaw, brings the Amerasian child of a Viet Nam veteran home to meet his widow. And John Goldfine's "Red Delicious" is a matter-of-fact tale of a Vietnamese orphan adopted by a white American family. These stories are followed by poetry by Dan Duffy and Leo Connellan. Steven Gross's "Shakespeare in the Sands" is a story of war in Israel, and contributing editor David Willson's "Waiting for Yank Rachell" is a story of a domestic war which was not so much lost, but misplaced. Then we've got poetry by Jean C. Sullivan, D.C. Anderson, and Thomas Gribble. John Williams tells us about his remarkable childhood in Laos, followed by more poetry by Edward Lynskey and R.S. Carlson. Irene Goldman reflects on her recent visit to China Beach, and Alvah Howe, Theresa Williams and Charles Scott give us more poetry. Mark Fogarty has written one of the nicer reflections on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall.

Phil Jason explains his reactions to *Miss Saigon* and the stories of Robert Olen Butler, while Kim Worthy comes at *Miss Saigon* from a completely different direction. These essays are followed by poetry from Carol Catanzariti and Ron Germundson. Contributing editor Alan Farrell takes a look at a Vietnamese soldier's story of the air war, and James Simms revisits the conference

on the Viet Nam war held at the institution where he and Farrell both teach—Hampden-Sidney College in Hampden-Sydney Virginia. We published Ted Lieverman's excellent essay on this conference in 6:1-2; Simms' perspective is very different.

Finally, Dan Duffy reviews Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner's *Cancer Year*, and Jonathan Shay replies to W.D. Ehrhart's review of his *Achilles in Vietnam*. Ehrhart responds to the response, and we also feature two more reviews of the same book, by Alan Farrell and Phoebe Spinrad. It will doubtless be noted that no review of *Achilles in Vietnam* that we've published has been very complimentary. This condemnation is not due to editorial bias—we were promised one favorable review by a potential contributor but it never materialized. What was submitted was universally negative—I guess it's just not popular in this crowd.... We close the issue with Maggie Jaffe's hard hitting political poetry. All in all, a nice collection, we think.

STEVE GOMES ON GRAPHIC ART

The graphics that appear in this issue have been lifted from the finest uncopyrighted Army Training Manuals and Field Manuals available. These graphics do more than balance out a column or occupy otherwise blank space—they're here for your amusement and edification. Think of it as your tax dollars reincarnated for a laugh. I chose some of them just because I thought they were amusing—either they just looked funny to me or the caption provided some weird comment on the graphic or (even better) the state of mind of the people who put it together. It's all here—everything from calm explanations of the "effective radius" of a land mine to really blatant sexism/racism. And somebody you know paid for it.

These graphics also serve an educational function. See, we get a lot of fiction and poetry submissions by non-vets who are just not up to speed on the hardware of the war in Viet Nam (like the person who wrote of a soldier who stepped on a claymore). So, if you're one of the folks whose technical knowledge isn't what it ought to be, think of the more technical graphics as references, sort of the academic version of Trading Cards of the Apocalypse, you know? Be the first on your block to collect all the 40mm grenade rounds! Make up flash cards for your students! Be creative. Have fun with it. God knows I do.

STATE OF THE JOURNAL

Dan went Ha Noi on December 1, 1994 and returned right after we went to press for this issue, on June 3. So Steve and I have been holding down the fort and doing all the work of producing, distributing and marketing our books and journals, promoting the *Sixties Generations Conference*, etc.. It's been rather a nightmare, though the two of us have been extremely productive. (And you're already starting to see the fruits of Dan's labors in Viet Nam, in the translations in this volume. You'll see a lot more of his work soon.)

We continue to survive on a hand-to-mouth basis—our income is still about equal to (or less than) our expenses, and it's been impossible to draw salaries though we continue to hope that the latter condition will change. Since 1993 we have been playing catchup ball, so our printing expenses are high right now. In 1995, we have already printed volumes of poetry by Joe Amato and M.L. Liebler. We anticipate printing the following books: poetry volumes by Horace Coleman, Gerald McCarthy, Dale Ritterbusch, Phil Jason and David Vancil; a novel by David Willson; anthologies on *Postmodernity and the Viet Nam War* and *Viet Nam and the West*, and three issues (6:3-4, 7:1-2 and 7:3-4). We estimate these new printing costs alone will be in the area of \$30,000. Next year our printing costs should be less since we will no longer have a backlog of books we are obligated to get out and can probably count on printing on 5-6 volumes and two journal issues, but it will be quite a feat to bring in enough money to cover this year's printers' bills.

We did receive a generous \$50,000 grant from the Ford Foundation this year, to supplement last year's \$25,000 grant. This sounds like a lot of money, and it is—but it is important to remember that grant money is allocated for particular projects and, in our case, can rarely be used to cover our basic expenses, including printing. This grant is in partial support of the journal, but it is primarily intended to strengthen our linkages with Viet Nam. What this means in practical terms is that the money is explicitly committed to such projects as publishing Viet Nam Generation, Inc. books in translation in Viet Nam, publishing Vietnamese writers in translation in the journal, bringing Vietnamese intellectuals to the Sixties Generations Conference, and funding Dan's editorial visits to Viet Nam so that he can continue to build our relationship with Vietnamese publishers, writers and intellectuals. It is *not* available to cover printing costs for any of our books (though it does cover some journal printing costs), or to pay for the day-to-day expenses that threaten to overwhelm us... like postage, office supplies, laser printer cartridges, rent, utilities, and telephone bills. It's kind of a funny thing, but it's possible to receive a terrific grant like this, and *still* go broke for lack of funds.

We've also received some substantial private support. A particular retired professor who taught at a women's college in Japan (and who worked in support of U.S. soldiers who deserted during the Viet Nam war) has taken us under his wing and sent us several thousand dollars over the last couple of years. He prefers to remain anonymous, but we wanted to take this opportunity to thank him in print for his interest and his generosity.

We need you to use Viet Nam Generation, Inc. books in your classrooms!

It's impossible to survive on subscriptions and individual book sales. But classroom sales can keep us going. So go over our catalog. Figure out what books match your

course text needs, and order them. We also need your donations and your continued subscriptions. Please go and insist that your local libraries begin to carry *Viet Nam Generation*. Don't take no for an answer. And those of you with connections to periodicals which review books and journal, *please* make sure that we get some ink.... Nothing helps a journal like a good review in, say, *Choice*. Surely there must be somebody out there in our audience who writes reviews for *Choice*.

SIXTIES GENERATIONS CONFERENCE

The 1994 Sixties Generations Conference was a resounding success. I invite you to join us for the third annual ***Sixties Generations Conference: From Montgomery to Viet Nam*** on October 5-8, 1995. Last year over 400 scholars and students joined us at Western Connecticut State University to hear more than one hundred presentations by academics, activists, and artists. ***The Sixties Generations Conference*** is a showcase for intelligent and lively academic work in a variety of disciplines and studies fields, but what makes it special is the interdisciplinary emphasis and the collegial atmosphere. We've demonstrated that mixing academics with artists, crossing disciplines, and spanning generations fosters a creative and collaborative excitement that can't be matched. Our evaluation forms showed that over 95% of those who attended last year will be back in 1995.

We remain committed to interdisciplinary work and to seeking diverse presentations. We particularly encourage the participation of those traditionally under-represented in academic discourse, and we do not shrink from controversial topics. In addition to soliciting work from traditional disciplines, we enthusiastically invite presentations in African American Studies, Chicano Studies, Women's Studies, Native American Studies and other studies programs.

This year we have broadened our international perspective. Grants from the Ford Foundation and the Asia Resource Council have enabled us to arrange the attendance of three Vietnamese scholars at the 1995 conference. Duong Tuong is Viet Nam's leading art critic and the translator of *Gone With the Wind* and other modern American fiction; he is currently working on translations of Flannery O'Connor. He was associated with Ha Noi's "Prague Spring," the Literary Humanism movement of the 1950s. Hoang Hien is the teacher and critic of Viet Nam's *doi moi* (*perestroika*) writers. He was the teacher of Bao Ninh and Duong Tuong, the two Vietnamese war novelists who have published in English in the U.S. Huu Ngoc is Viet Nam's senior cultural journalist, formerly editor of the Foreign Languages Publishing House, author of the first Vietnamese language book on American civilization. These scholars were invited to participate by Viet Nam Generation, Inc. editor Dan Duffy, who has lived and worked in Ha Noi for nine months setting up our program of translating Vietnamese literature into English, and Viet Nam Generation publications into Vietnamese.

We know that most of the best work at conferences is done *between* sessions, when people get the chance to talk, to share stories, to set up collaborations. So we do our best to make sure that there is plenty of time for these activities—we arrange for meals to be available at the conference site, set up a lounge for refreshments, and keep coffee and tea available all day long. We also arrange evening events—our Sixties style coffeehouse reading was so successful last year that we will do it again, breaking it up into two nights of poetry, fiction, multimedia and performance art.

As usual, we are doing all this work on a shoestring. Viet Nam Generation, Inc., is a literary and educational nonprofit which cannot yet afford to salary its staff. This conference has been supported entirely by volunteer efforts, the registration fees of participants and by our book sales. The facilities are generously provided by Western Connecticut State University. We know that many conferences can afford to waive fees for those presenting papers, but we cannot. We do waive fees for those who would not otherwise be able to participate, and we do our best to find alternative housing for those who cannot afford hotel rooms. We're committed to the notion that no one should be turned away for lack of funds. To meet this goal we rely on support from those who *do* have funds—faculty members or others with full-time positions and decent incomes. In fact, we encourage you, if you can afford it, to pay an extra registration fee to cover someone else with fewer resources.

Part of our philosophy is that we do not rank those who attend the Sixties Generations Conference—there are no "stars" here; we don't even put your institution on your name tag. We have no "keynote" speakers or "special" sessions. Those who attend don't do it for their c.v. They do it—and *we* do it—because the work we all do is vital, because we believe in an alternative to the rest of the deadly dull gatherings which pass for conferences in academia, and because we are dedicated to building a *community* of scholars, activists, and artists who can support each other in our work.

Last year we wound up just about breaking even on the *Sixties Generations Conference*. We didn't sell as many books as we hoped at the conference itself (most of the attendees already *had* all our books), but it did introduce teachers to one of our poets with terrific results—sales of David Connolly's *Lost in America* for use as a classroom text are much higher than we expected; in fact, those sales account for our continued survival. Obviously, we need to get more books like David's out into circulation, and we hope to do that at this year's conference.

The conferences really take a lot out of us, since the organizational tasks required to put together a smoothly run event are simply piled on top of our usual impossible mountain of work. But we do think *Sixties Generations* is essential for ensuring the continued growth of our community of scholars and researchers. This year we've applied for a substantial grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council to assist us with conference costs. Last year CHC gave us a \$1400 discretionary grant to subsidize student attendance, and they were pleased

with our conference report, so we have high hopes. Nothing, of course, is certain, though we'll have the news about this grant by the time you've got this issue in your hands.

SIXTIES-L ELECTRONIC DISCUSSION LIST

I'd like to urge readers who have internet accounts to subscribe to the electronic discussion list that we sponsor along with the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia—Charlottesville. At this point there are between 550-600 scholars, students, librarians and researchers subscribed to the list and conversation is lively. There is no better resource for finding the answers to obscure or difficult questions. To subscribe to the list, simply send a message to:

listproc@jefferson.village.virginia.edu

Leave the subject line blank. The message should read simply:

subscribe SIXTIES-L Your Name

For instance, if your name was Huey Newton, it would read:

subscribe SIXTIES-L Huey Newton

A NOTE FROM STEVE

Well, there it is. Another double-issue in the can.

Yeah, I know it's late. But if you hold 6:1-2 and this issue and the two most recent books in the White Noise series in your hands and really think about the fact that three people made it all happen, you might be able to see your way clear to take it easy on us. Really, everything from deciding what goes on the cover (and in some cases generating the artwork), to copy editing and typesetting the text, to making sure that we have enough money coming in from subscriptions and grants to pay our printer—three people.

The worst part, I guess, is the more work that we do, the less it looks like we've done much of anything. I mean, there's the usual theater-type rule about the audience not really noticing the form unless you've screwed up somehow. But there's also a weird sort of universal law that says the more work that we do on an issue means less time to write a column, or a book review, or even something goofy like that comic strip I've been wanting to draw. In a lot of ways it's kind of like having a lot of really smart people over for a great big dinner party and trying to participate in the after-dinner conversation from the kitchen while doing the dishes.

This piece is a great example. Here I am writing this little note and at the same time I'm thinking about the deadlines for the next double-issue and the eight or so book covers that I have to get done. But I'm not complaining, really. I mean, hell, I'm just glad I was invited.

NEW LEFT, NEW RIGHT, NEW WORLD

Paul Lyons, *Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, Jim Leeds Road, Pomona, NJ 08240-1095.*

As Daniel Bell anticipated an end of ideology, as Louis Hartz concluded that there was only a liberal tradition in America, as most social scientists assumed the inevitability of a modernization process which peaked with the mature welfare state, as Kenneth Keniston worried about the apathy of educated youth, we entered the 1960s.

It is of particular interest to come to grips with the fact that at that moment not only did virtually no observer anticipate the coming of a radical upsurge, but that if any activism was expected it was assumed to be of the Right rather than of the Left. Dan Wakefield, in his memoir *New York in the Fifties*, recalls that the early Goldwater boom led him to assume that "the conservative boomlet on campuses was a rising tide that would define the Sixties generation." And Murray Kempton, in 1962, proclaimed, "We must assume that the conservative revival is the youth movement of the Sixties." Wakefield even projected that the Goldwater youth movement might be "as important to its epoch as the Young Communist League was to the thirties."

So, what happened and why did it happen? What accounts for the rise of any significant ideological youth movement during the 1960s? And what accounts for the seeming primacy of a more leftward rather than a more rightward one? A culture which seemed to be on a very stable track toward a Keynesian mixed economy entered a roller coaster ride which includes destabilizers as diverse as Abbie Hoffman, George Wallace, Barry Goldwater, Huey Newton, Robin Morgan, Ken Kesey, Tim Leary, Bella Abzug, Tom Hayden, and Bob Dylan.

One way to begin to figure out how permanence turned into change is to examine how particular groups imagined the engines of such change. For example, what distinguishes Beat from hippie is that the former never anticipated social change; their very beatness rested on a sense of the hopelessness of penetrating the suburban walls of the new bourgeoisie. All that was left to do was to howl at the injustices and to build counter-communities of the blessed in the enclaves of Greenwich Village, North Beach and other less populous but simpatico places. The Beats embraced jazz, increasingly a highly specialized, sophisticated music which, at one extreme, was turning its very back on its audiences. They were contemptuous of mass culture, bubble-gum rock 'n roll or Patti Page pop. They were in the classical mold of the romantic, bohemian tradition, almost needing the dull, repressed middle class to juxtapose with their quest for a life of the ultimate experiences, the experimental life. Their heroes were those who burnt the candle at both ends, tested the limits of consciousness, of experience itself, internal or external.

It is strikingly clear that the cultural contradictions of 1950s capitalism were stretching to a breaking point. The Beats were, in some ways, merely the low-cost version of what Hugh Hefner was marketing for a faster

lane of consumption. Barbara Ehrenreich shrewdly concludes, in *Flight From Commitment*, that men were moving toward a new version of the double standard, based on sexual access. She suggests that Beats and Playboys were variants of a common flight from the responsibilities of marriage and family. Why should the *Playboy* reader, now having available disposable income, now living in an environment promoting the titillation of pleasures, give up the fullest range of sexual possibilities? Why hand over one's hard earned income to a wife; why sacrifice the same for children? The Beat version argued that the kind of effort involved in earning that hefty disposable income was unnecessary to achieve the same, even greater pleasure. Drop the wall-to-wall carpeting, the Maserati and the expensive suits, the insurance and the home mortgage; instead, simplify, simplify, simplify! With a pad, a mattress, enough to maintain the essentials of books and records, one could concentrate on what really matters—beauty, truth, pleasure. Ya' can't be a free man on week-ends if you're a corporate slave Mondays through Fridays. Women were welcomed into this club, but all too often the Beat men were not prepared to grant them the same privileges. It was a cushy deal; the men got liberated from the responsibilities of family. And they were heroic.

Social change requires an anticipation of the heroic. The Beats limited their anticipation to individual and small group acts—the Kerouac hero on the road, always in motion, ready for balling and brawling; the brilliant jazz readings of Ginsberg or Gregory Corso, stretching the language, reviving the oral tradition. Their hero was one who could shock the bourgeoisie, freak them out, as the term developed later; but there was no belief, even desire to change the society, to make history. After all, in an era of Stanley Kowalski, the first Polish joke, of Ralph Kramden as working class stiff, of Ozzie and Harriet and David and Ricky, where might one invest hope?

Many of the Beats, like their predecessors of the 1920s, did invest in African-American street life—sexuality, drugs, jazz, crime, cool. But this was simply part of the counter-cultures to integrate into bohemia, all of the anti-Wests—Zen Buddhism, Navaho, Mayan, Gypsy, Hindu, Taoist, outlaw, psychopath, insane. Only with the counter-cultural hippies of the 1960s would there be an expectation that the heroes of experience and experiment might be the pied pipers of suburban youth, stealing children away from their uptight parents with the holy trinity of sex, drugs, and rock 'n roll. Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, the Yippies, would be the first to anticipate the possibilities of a Woodstock Nation, a greening of America. The rock world would toss out and then destroy some of the pied pipers, Jim Morrison most particularly.

This aspect of the 1960s rests on a recognition that the culture needed some liberating, needed to soften the contradictions between its pleasure-driven economy and its Victorian and quite ambivalent codes. Godfrey Hodgson is quite on the money to see Telegraph Avenue as "Son of Madison Avenue," that is, to emphasize how the counter-culture, despite itself, played into the functional need of a mass production, culture of abundance

economy to market mass consumption, credit-card buying, what Stuart Ewen calls "the psychic desire to consume."

It is as if the culture jumped from super-ego controls to id-impulses without passing through or gaining very much ego strength. We went from denials of bodily pleasures to moral imperatives to fuck. Obsession, as Calvin Klein must understand, remained a constant. The consequences were invaluable if fraught with disasters and long-term problems. As the quest for a heroic agency of social change collapsed under the weight of Altamont and, perhaps more significantly, the downturn of the economy, the counter-culture reduced to merely partying, to a routinizing of greater degrees of sexual and linguistic freedoms, wider ranges of lifestyle choices, greater tolerances for deviance. The limitations were noted by Michael Harrington in a thoughtful essay on the decline of bohemia. When the middle class buys into pleasure, and cheers and encourages the avant-garde cultural rebels, in fact, gets off from being freaked out, longs to be freaked out, and pays big bucks to be freaked out, bohemia is subverted. In effect, how does one freak out those who are beyond being freaked out?

Whereas the bohemians, Beat and hippie, used negritude as a means toward their own liberation from WASP repressiveness, those more traditionally left of center, especially the New Left, found another kind of inspiration in Black America. Here is the beginning, the Alpha, the source of the rise of a New Left, of all of the social movements of the 1960s. In fact, what we mean by the Sixties begins with the civil rights revolution.

This is not particularly controversial, but it cannot be overemphasized. In a climate without expectations, with an increasingly comfortable, unionized working class, with Khrushchev's Twentieth Party Congress denunciation of Stalin's crimes, with only existential commitments seemingly available, the civil rights revolution inspired that segment of educated youth who would form the New Left.

Certainly many of the first cohort of New Leftists were from liberal homes with core liberal values; they were disproportionately Jewish, prone to identify with the underdog. But even in such cases there were alternatives to creating a new radical student movement. Tom Hayden, a Catholic growing up in suburban Royal Oak, aspiring to be an international correspondent, a heroic journalist, found initial inspiration in the cultural rebellions associated with *Catcher in the Rye*, with James Dean, with Kerouac's *On the Road*. He took to the road, to Berkeley where he found civil rights with a little help from his new friends. The experience of going South was a catalyst for many of the founding members of Students for a Democratic Society. They saw Southern blacks behaving with great dignity in the face of White Citizens Council terrorism, they sat in churches rocking with a religious enthusiasm and a sense of community few had experienced in their Northern, college-educated families. From such experiences, they came to view themselves as a political elite—although they would have blanched at the terminology—interested in enriching individual lives through commitment to the creation of a beloved commu-

nity. As James Miller has noted, this belief in a participatory democracy was laced with contradictory desires—one, to construct pure, thoroughly egalitarian and liberated lives; two, to extend such lives to all oppressed and marginalized people. The former tended to become an enclave model within which one first liberated oneself in a communal setting; purify oneself before having the validity, the sanctification if you will, to change others. The latter sought to bring the revolution to the masses; at first those masses were the Southern blacks and were expanded to what early SDS called "an interracial movement of the poor."

To early SDS and the New Left, the agent of social change was youth itself, heroic youth, the hero as revolutionary activist. As long as there was a belief that "out there" was a constituency—sharecroppers, the unemployed, students, freaks, Third World peoples, this model had resiliency. It began with the 40,000 African-Americans of Montgomery, Alabama refusing to take the segregated buses; its last gasp included the Black Panthers and the Viet Cong.

Recall that when the 1960s begins virtually no one, perhaps only C. Wright Mills, anticipates that there will be a New Left of young intelligentsia. The hero is the moment seems to be a witty, stylish, Cold Warrior, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Norman Mailer, in his idiosyncratic fashion, understood the heroic possibilities in Kennedy, a bringing together of the aphrodisiac of Washington power, Hollywood and Broadway glamour, and Cambridge gray matter. Kennedy seemed to be all that Eisenhower was not: young, energetic, risk-taking, hatless, sexy, articulate. Perhaps the empire was not in decline, perhaps the young prince could turn things about, establish Camelot.

The Sixties begins with the election of Kennedy and the response to Kennedy, especially among intellectuals and artists. Among the growing educated professional middle classes—granted their preference for the patrician Stevenson—it reflected a desire to escape the Weberian cage, to find ways to halt the erosion of imagination and creativity and spontaneity. My favorite movie of that period is Herb Gardner's *A Thousand Clowns* in which a free spirit, harassed by Chuckles the Clown and his mindless morning TV show, worn down by a heartless state bureaucracy which refuses to see that, despite his joblessness, despite his essential irresponsibility about parenting and housekeeping, he is trying desperately to raise his son—marches off to his gray-flanneled, buttoned down, white collar job. He surrenders. What are his options in the America before the Sixties? He joins Paul Goodman's cynical rat race after at least giving the system a goose and a ride.

Whereas the New Left was inspired by the civil rights revolution, by the heroism of African-Americans, those who created the New Right seemed driven by their resistance to the very same. What drove the conservative surge on campuses that Dan Wakefield and Murray Kempton anticipated during Kennedy's 1,000 days?

The standard accounts of the rise of conservatism in the 1950s emphasize the role of fusionism in balancing

the contradictions which had limited conservative unity up to that moment. Prior to the emergence of William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *National Review*, conservatism seemed destined for the ideological scrap heap, another victim of the inexorable triumph of the welfare state. There wasn't even consensus about the use of the term conservative to describe an alternative to the ongoing liberal consensus. There was the free-market libertarianism of Friedrich Hayek and his circle, arguing that all forms of state intervention, in circumscribing individual liberties associated with the marketplace, tended toward totalitarianism. On the other hand there were various forms of traditionalist ideologies, rooted in Edmund Burke, Joseph de Maistre, which focused on the value of an organic community, sometimes idealized as medieval, sometimes as agrarian Southern, but always suspicious of the Enlightenment privileging of Reason. If the libertarian strand worshipped freedom, the traditionalist segment was devoted to community. Foremost, there was the issue of anti-Communism, seized by the fusionists, to produce the awkward coalition of Adam Smith and Edmund Burke.

I would like to suggest that a useful way to approach the study of the 1960s is to see it as confronting several challenges. One challenge, embodied in the counter-culture, reflects the ways in which the cultural contradictions of American capitalism sharpened during the reactionary Fifties leading to the explosion of pleasure-seeking and exploration of the 1960s. Certainly once things settled down, one discovered how much of that seemingly radical rebellion was merely functional to a culture of abundance. At the same time, the forms this set of rebellions took in an America both blessed and cursed with a distinctive religious heritage remain with us in the culture wars so many observers see as dividing our nation as we approach the twenty-first century. The revolt of the freaks and the ways in which week-end hippies and fraternity and sorority youth absorbed the license to explore forbidden pleasures reflects the antinomian spirit—do your own thing. This quality would have an interesting impact on the two more political rebellions, including that which was labeled conservative.

As opposed to the counter-culture and the New Left, conservatism was not distinctively a youth movement. Buckley's *National Review* drew on mostly experienced veterans of the ideological wars of the New Deal and McCarthy period—ex-Communists turned anti-Communists, conservative Catholic intellectuals, free marketeers. What interests me is the idealism, the ways in which this developing conservatism, analogous to New Left radicalism, saw itself as a moral challenge to the welfare state. After all, the Politics of Growth was at the top of its game when Buckley launched his journal or even when the Young Americans for Freedom adopted The Sharon Statement at Buckley's Connecticut estate several months before Kennedy edged Nixon for the presidency in 1960.

In that election, both candidates stood for variants of the liberal consensus. They were anti-ideological

moderates, both ferocious but pragmatic anti-Communists in foreign policy, both comfortable with maintaining and incrementally expanding the American welfare state. Only one, however, Kennedy, was in the heroic mold, with his generational appeal, his forceful and eloquent call for national service—the Peace Corps and the Green Berets. But Kennedy was most of all a technician, a fine-tuner of an already rationalized, functional system.

On both the left and right, challenges commenced, both of which would have profound impact on the body politic, both of which would shake and shatter operating assumptions about the nature and direction of modernization. I am interested in the ways in which these two challenges formed and expressed themselves, in what they had in common and in how they differed. It seems clear to me that the politics of the late 1990s, as E. J. Dionne, Jr. has so powerfully noted, are being driven by both the successes and the ultimate inadequacies of those challenges to the welfare state raised by New Right and New Left.

The New Right, as suggested above, was adult initiated. Buckley and then the Goldwater movement were the primary energizers. However it seems to me that there was a battle for cultural hegemony occurring on college campuses in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s; while most college youth were attempting, not always successfully, to get on with making lives and careers and families, others, small but fervent aspiring elites were imagining the making of history.

The Fifties, postwar culture offered significant possibilities to intellectually driven students. In the midst of the cultural wasteland of TV and suburbia was a vibrant, attractive culture in the making—it was an era when the New York intellectuals were carving out major spaces in our institutional, cultural life, when New York replaced Paris as the capital of the world of art, when *Commentary*, *Partisan Review*, *The New Yorker* brought the most stimulating of an increasingly global culture of those interested in an alternative to the corporate rat-race. It would be most unwise to underestimate the vibrancy of Fifties elite culture and its academic aspects.

Within that academy, the dominant voices in the humanities were those valuing notions of paradox, ambiguity, tragedy, while in the social sciences structural-functionalism reigned. It wasn't a friendly environment for bohemian poets, Marxists, or conservatives attracted to the writings of Richard Weaver or Russell Kirk. A liberalism of "the vital center" was in the saddle.

The conservative challenge in campuses seems to have attracted a different audience than would the New Left movement. The New Left students were more affluent, more likely to be Jewish and from secular Protestant denominations, and attending elite institutions than those who joined the Goldwater student movement. Conservative youth were more likely to be Catholic, middle class and attending more second level institutions. What were they thinking, what attracted them to conservatism?

The Sharon Statement is one way to begin an answer, especially when one considers it in light of the more well-known Port Huron Statement of SDS. For one,

it presupposes, as did Kennedy and SDS, a "time of moral and political crisis." Kennedy's was the international communist threat, SDS' would be the contradictions between American ideals and American performance in a context darkened by the cloud of nuclear annihilation. But to YAFers the crisis was as Kennedy defined it—"the forces of international Communism are, at present, the greatest single threat to" our liberties. But the young conservatives differed by both their assessment of how to engage that global threat and in their estimation of the impact of domestic forces on our capacity to triumph. It's interesting to contrast the sense of generational identity of Port Huron—"We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit."—with that of YAF, who took a more traditional, ideological approach to manifesto writing. YAFers exhibited no sign of introspective concerns.

SDS pinpoints the fight against Jim Crow and racism, the alienation of "meaningless work" and the contrast between "superfluous abundance" and global poverty; they set their generational moment in the decline of colonialism and in the zero-sum terror of the Cold War. There's, indeed, nothing about considering themselves as possibly "the last generation in the experiment with living" in The Sharon Statement. Although the words don't appear in the Statement, they clearly would "rather be dead than red." YAF idealism begins with "eternal truths" and "transcendent values". Their communal desires rest on such universals, but the zeal of the document is with freedom, their own version of what SNCC called a "freedom high". But in this case it is driven by God's providence, a "right to be free from the restrictions of arbitrary force," to experience a liberty that is "indivisible," i.e., resting on economic and political freedom. The communal, traditionalist dimension returns to restrict government, to protect the above freedoms "through the preservation of internal order, the provision of national defense, and the administration of justice." Conservative youth stood for what would soon be called law and order, maximum defense spending, and a willingness to have that very same government violating individual rights under the primacy of national security needs.

The Sharon Statement goes on to invest these rights to liberty in their version of constitutional law, most especially a states' rights stance vis a vis federal tyrannies and in their veneration for the invisible hand of the market.

The attractions to this manifesto are clear. The Soviet Union embodied evil and was aggressively pursuing its interests in the world. We needed to confront that aggression with all our resources. There was a moral fervor in denying any accommodation to our relations with the Soviets. How could one compromise with Stalinists and their heirs? Why not seek victory, as both The Sharon Statement and Barry Goldwater in his campaign writings, demanded?

Liberals, including ferocious anti-Communists like Kennedy, held to what I would call a pragmatic anti-Communism. They saw Communism as evil, but recog-

nized that it existed within historical, geographical entities called nation-states, which had interests which were more finite, less cosmic. Conservatives held to a strictly ideological version of anti-Communism. It was seamless, demonic, absolute. There were only "the" Communists, not the variation which many liberals, at least in private increasingly recognized, e.g., Soviet versus Chinese Communists, Yugoslavian Communism, Western European, "polycentric" Communism, etc. Whereas the liberals saw a long-term protracted struggle along a series of fault lines, which required a vigilant containment against Communist expansion, the Goldwaterite conservatives saw an avaricious enemy taking advantage of a morally weak, half-socialistic, West.

What the conservatives had more difficulty in addressing was the North-South fault rooted in decolonization. For the most part they were fighting the tide of history, aligning themselves with colonial rulers, with South African apartheid, with every Third World dictator who mouthed an anti-Communist line. Of course, the liberals were not far behind, often afraid to open themselves up to neo-McCarthyite assaults. But the liberals, Kennedy for example, had more confidence, were more in touch with historical trends. Kennedy saw himself as in a global, moral rivalry with an upstart Communism; he understood that the United States was in a contest for the hearts and minds of Third World people and that we couldn't simply stand for the status quo or, worse, the colonial past. Buckley's *National Review* too often seemed to prefer the British Colonial Office to a genuine self-determination of all nations. The conservative position in foreign affairs did project an idealism, but this was marred by its tendency toward a nostalgia for the ancient regimes and a contempt for Third World peoples finally resting on racism.

As such, campus conservatism could attract some idealists to its foreign policy militancy, but suffered from its racial parochialisms, its snobberies. Second generation Catholic youth might find inspiration in an ideological anti-Communism directed against Iron Curtain domination, but there was this *National Review* racial snobbery to manage. Many couldn't.

On college campuses, many emerging conservative students were inspired by the novels and Objectivist philosophy of Ayn Rand. *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* were campus best sellers; they offered a heroic alternative to the vital center, a laissez-faire libertarianism ferocious in its opposition to state powers. In many ways, Rand cuts to the heart of what drove much of New Right idealism; its association with the frontier individualism in American mythology. What if those of us who are the true creators withdrew our services from the parasites, why can't a creator destroy what others have stolen from him? Here was a muscular option to Adlai Stevenson and the grandfatherly like!

Ayn Rand's dilemma was that she was an Enlightenment devotee, a prophet of Reason, an adversary of sentimentality, most especially all forms of religion. To Rand, religion was a measure of cowardice, an evasion of the material realities. She was truly a nineteenth century Manchester liberal and, of course, an incurable Roman-

tic. As such, she and her movement could not fuse—in fact, it was constantly defused. Objectivism denied the truths of what Peter Clecak calls “temperamental conservatism” and “philosophical conservatism.” The former rests on a congenital caution—“if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”; the latter, more powerfully, articulated by Kirk, Robert Nisbet, Richard Weaver, Peter Viereck, rooted in traditions which begin with Edmund Burke, saw religious, moral authority as essential to the stability of all social orders. These cultural conservatives couldn’t abide Rand’s mix of rationalism and romanticism; they held firmly to a belief in human frailty, in sin itself. Both tended toward an acceptance of human inequality, but Rand’s celebration of selfishness, of the lack of any responsibilities toward others contrasted with cultural conservatism’s belief that those more able and fortunate had social responsibilities toward their “inferiors.” Rand’s militant atheism, finally, ruled her out as a part of *National Review* fusionism, but her single-minded individualism inspired many who joined the developing New Right.

It would be fascinating to know how many Ayn Rand devotees ended up as New Left or counter-cultural rebels. There clearly has been movement from Right to Left—Karl Hess and Garry Wills are the most notable examples—and from Left to Right—the Second Thoughts examples of Peter Collier and David Horowitz come to mind; there has also been figures like Murray Rothbard, whose libertarianism, led him to significantly alliance with the New Left despite his free-market ideology. Right or Left?

The New Left dominated the 1960s social movements because it understood and proceeded to act on the need to reconcile American promise with American performance. The New Left *begins* with its recognition of the centrality of the civil rights revolution. And the radical movements of the 1960s play a catalytic role in the expansion of democratic rights to a wider and wider set of Americans—beginning with African-Americans, extending to women, Hispanics, Native-Americans, the disabled, gays and lesbians, and, by force of example, ethnic Americans. The de-Waspization of America was accomplished as the promise of our historical mandate—“All men are created equal”—was extended to all previously marginalized, oppressed groups.

The New Left, influenced by the bohemian tradition and intertwined with the counter-culture, also recognized that there needed to be more freedom for all peoples to express themselves. While the conceit that fucking in the streets while high on acid and grooving to rock ‘n roll would make people revolutionary proved to be illusory, the cultural and political rebellions of the Sixties did lead to more choice, more tolerance, more spontaneity and flair. Jewish women, since Streisand, are less likely to straighten their hair or fix their noses; Italians like DeNiro can play romantic leads. We have become a significantly more diverse culture with what began as a “Black is Beautiful” campaign.

The New Left developed a concept of corporate liberalism, a critique of the developing welfare state, which was of two minds. On the one hand, it criticized the

incompleteness and therefore the hypocrisies of the American welfare state. It saw and attacked racism, poverty, soon to be joined by sexism, homophobia, and other forms of exclusion. But the New Left, at its very heart, did not believe that the System had the capacity to reach completeness; the New Left’s heart was socialist. It doubted the capacity of capitalism to achieve its utopian dreams of middleclasslessness, what Lyndon Johnson called The Great Society, which, in part, was to be the consequence of the War on Poverty and a wide assortment of other Politics of Growth programs. At the same time, New Leftists called into question the attractiveness of such an accomplishment—that, in fact, drove much of the New Left’s vision, the argument that the very *success* of the System, its ability to deliver the goods, its suburban soul, was defective, unworthy of liberated citizens. It was the *successful* welfare state which New Leftists attacked, because such an entity risked the fulfillment of the Weberian nightmare of soullessness, because it was technocratic, anti-democratic, elitist, culturally degrading, philistine, alienating. Alienation was the sine qua non of critique. Capitalism, in encouraging competition, in requiring a restless acquisitiveness, fell short of addressing the human potential to experience a more participatory community based on authentic values, e.g., pleasure, beauty, truth, unalienating work.

The New Left would remain ambivalent about the welfare state throughout its brief history. Tom Hayden’s romance with Robert Kennedy, precisely at the point at which he is becoming a romantic communist, reflects this ambivalence. An attraction to the heroics of the Kennedys, especially Bobby’s more populist, visceral style, his existential, Irish, passionate, touching politics, indicate ways in which the New Left focused on a critique of a rationalized, bureaucratic welfare state. There was something *missing* from the vital center, vitality itself.

The New Right was behind the historical curve on a number of issues which explain its lesser successes during the 1960s. YAF and other conservative youth organizations, the Goldwater campaign, all resisted, to their shame, the truths of the civil rights revolution. Under the guise of states’ rights, they exploited racist bigotries and contradicted their own commitments to a libertarian belief in equal opportunity and a traditionalist commitment to gradual change. They stood for no change at all—other than the rollback of both communism and the liberal welfare state.

And while campus conservatives were a part of the early Free Speech Movement, as they had been a part of the deviant subculture of Greenwich Village of the early 1960s, their libertarian voice was drowned out by their more elitist desires. Campus conservatives were mostly enamored with Bill Buckley’s style, his wit, his vocabulary; he was the role model. And it was an aristocratic one; attractive to working-class and middle-class youth seeking their own way toward respectability, toward the accouterments of culture. Buckley personified the still reactionary qualities of fusionism—its tendency to admire Third World thugs, its jokes about wogs, its snobbery.

What needed to happen for the New Right to effectively compete with the New Left for a leadership role in making challenges to the welfare state was a shift from Buckley Anglophilia to an alternative populism. Both Tom and Mary Edsall and E. J. Dionne tells us, in great detail, how conservatives make this very successful shift. They had available the excesses of the New Left: a developing radical elitism, an anti-Americanism, a patronizing support for oppressed groups no matter the validity of the claim; a radically antinomian tolerance for behaviors which contributed to the breakdown of law and order.

New Right conservatives only needed the breaking down of the welfare state, the economic crises which halted the growth upon which the Politics of Growth relied, to envision and act upon a more populist political strategy. The people those Buckleyites had viewed with a kind of arch-contempt, might be open to conservative arguments, after all. Goldwater, then George Wallace, Governor Ronald Reagan, then Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew, all demonstrated the ways in which a Great Silent Majority of Middle Americans, ethnics, hard-hats, Archie Bunkers, Bubbas and good ol' boys, fundamentalists and evangelicals, all resented and opposed what conservatives called the new "special interests," articulated by a "new class" of "pointy-headed intellectuals," "nattering nabobs of negativity." Nixon called them "bums."

The New Left had been built, despite its ambivalence, on traditional liberal, Democratic visions of "the people" against "the interests." Liberalism and varieties of socialism always have shared an inherent suspiciousness of the capacity of capitalists to pursue the public interest and a belief that the pursuit of profit was a problematical moral goal.

The New Right, on the other hand, celebrated that pursuit and had an alternative suspiciousness concerning the benevolence of all state activities but for those related to defense, police, and morality. When the liberal consensus fell apart and the New Left and related movements fragmented into a politics of group identity, there was room for a conservative resurgence. The New Right could now engage in its own assaults on the welfare state in the belief that free markets and competition would open up greater areas for human liberty.

From the vantage point of the 1990s one can argue that both New Left and New Right—and neo-bohemian—critiques had cogent arguments about the inadequacies of the Vital Center. The neo-bohemians, the hippies and freaks, would provoke the culture toward greater tolerance for difference and greater capacity for human pleasures. They would also force all of us to pay more attention to the ways we treated our bodies and the earth itself. It was not a marginal contribution to help Americans see that knowledge without wisdom, work without play, sex without pleasure, religion without spirituality were unsatisfactory.

The New Left clearly would contribute much that would fundamentally change our society for the better, especially in extending rights and opportunities to previously excluded groups. It also played a major role in challenging mindless anti-Communist approaches to the

Cold War, in opposing our military interventions in Indochina.

The New Right reminded many of us that there was life in conservatism after all. While they often took the low road toward exclusion, bigotry and a kind of "I've got mine" selfishness, conservatives also forced all parties to consider the repressive, manipulative, and life-inhibiting qualities of the state; they re-opened the issue of the value of the marketplace in democratic decision-making. This alone was an invaluable contribution, given that both liberal and socialist traditions had tended to increasingly privilege state interventions, particularly in the economy. This was an issue of liberty and, therefore, had to be, finally, compelling, to liberals and democratically inclined radicals.

In addition, conservatives forced all parties to come to grips with the ways in which the New Left notions of empowerment and participatory democracy could not be limited to particular groups but had to pay attention to what they called Middle Americans—or else. Those who would move past Buckley's polysyllables and eschew Wallace's pitches to bigotry, would invest conservative values in a new politics of "the people" against "the special interests," the producing classes of Kevin Phillips against the parasitic alliance of new class intellectuals and welfare cheats and criminals. Their moment in the political sun would come after the radical movements of the Sixties lost their sense of direction.

THE ENEMY IS ALWAYS LISTENING

"Did you say that Mr. Dean Acheson is a pink?": The Walker Case and the Cold War

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Mrs. R.H. Middleton, a housewife and mother, confronted Robert McNamara shortly after the Secretary of Defense completed his testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Urged by Strom Thurmond, the panel was examining, in the words of its final report, "the use of military personnel and facilities to arouse the public to the menace of the cold war" as well as "the content and criteria for judging the content of troop informational and educational programs." General Edwin Walker, commander of the Army's 24th Infantry Division in Germany, particularly interested the senators. A few months earlier, in the spring of 1961, the decorated combat veteran had been reprimanded by the Army for deluging his troops with anti-Communist propaganda, including literature produced by the ultra-conservative John Birch Society. Thurmond and others wondered if the United States could afford to "muzzle" a patriot like Ted Walker. "Suppression of free speech is characteristic of dictatorship," Thurmond argued, "and suppression of discussion of the Communist menace multiplies our vulnerability to that menace."¹

McNamara carefully explained the Penatgon's position—endorsed by the president—to the committee. The secretary said:

We make no effort to shield Americans from provocative thoughts just because they are in uniform. But we do not permit Defense Department personnel, civilian or military, to advance either side of partisan political issues, nor do we place the Defense Department stamp of approval on a viewpoint which is not settled or established national policy.²

The Army had produced a massive report on Walker's escapades in Germany. According to that document, his "Pro-Blue" program for indoctrinating the troops had clearly violated Army regulations and the Hatch Act. Walker also had publicly questioned the loyalty of former President Harry Truman and former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. McNamara, justifying the Army's decision to censure Walker, inserted long passages of the report into the record of his Armed Services Committee testimony.

McNamara's testimony placated the senators but annoyed the dozens of housewives who crowded into Room 318 of the Old Senate Office Building for the hearings. It was the first week of September, and most wore colorful summer dresses—dresses plastered with badges bearing the slogan, "Stop Communism." The conservative women jeered McNamara throughout the day and applauded Senator Thurmond. At one point their cheering prompted Richard Russell, chair of the

committee, to warn, "I'll have the room cleared of those people if that happens again." But while most of the women heckled from a safe distance, Mrs. R.H. Middleton boldly approached Secretary McNamara as he packed up his briefcase after testifying.

"Have you read General Walker's Pro-Blue program?" she asked.

McNamara, smiling, admitted that he hadn't read it.

"You haven't?" Mrs. Middleton snapped. "Why, it's the best statement against Communism. I believe our armed forces should get this material."

The exchange caught the Secretary of Defense—well-known for overwhelming and humiliating adversaries in face-to-face confrontations—by surprise. Weary and flustered, McNamara collected his papers and looked toward the door. Then, ignoring Mrs. Middleton, he quickly left the conference room.³

As the "Walker case" made news throughout 1961 and 1962, many Americans—congressmen, senators, newspaper editors, housewives, servicemen, even small boys—agreed with Mrs. Middleton's belief that American servicemen should receive "the best statement against Communism." James Quinlan, an 11-year old, wrote a letter to President Kennedy that his mother intercepted and forwarded to her local paper, the *Santa Ana* (California) *Register*. Young Quinlan wrote, ". . . I heard that you pulled out a general for teaching Americanism. Would you rather for him to teach communism to all those men? Would you like somebody like Karl Marx to teach those men communism? You know that if communism takes over you'll be the first one to be shot or hung."⁴ World War I flying hero Eddie Rickenbacker, chair of Eastern Airlines, asked, "Who are they so ordained or assumed to be qualified to tell our fighting forces how they should prepare and conduct themselves in battle to win and not to lose a war?"⁵ In Appleton, Wisconsin, the *Post-Crescent* defended "General Walker's right of freedom of opinion;"⁶ in New York, the *Mirror* claimed, "No matter how it is sliced, General Walker seems to have committed the crime of being excessively patriotic, of preferring his own country to Soviet Russia, and of finding the Communist system offensive to the ideals of an American;"⁷ in Hopewell, Virginia, the *News* decried the government's unusual treatment of Walker, arguing that Washington had "protected leftwingers and pinks from the consequences of their actions and talk, when we thought it was downright subversive;"⁸ and in York, Pennsylvania, the *Dispatch* asked, "Are we getting to the point where uncompromising patriotism is a characteristic to be frowned upon?"⁹ The Texas senate resolved that Walker had "proved his undying and unshakable loyalty to his beloved United States of America" and thus deserved that body's "unqualified support."¹⁰

On the floor of the House of Representatives, conservatives like Dale Alford and O.C. Fisher frequently defended Walker and attacked the Pentagon. In September, 1961, for instance, Fisher told his colleagues, "In my book, there is no such thing as being overzealous in the exposure of every facet of the Communist conspiracy. And our troops need this zeal applied to them as much or more than do others." A few of Fisher's colleagues in the

Senate—Strom Thurmond and Barry Goldwater in particular—also defended the general and his actions in Germany. Goldwater said:

When we reach the point where we have a bunch of namby-pambies as our generals, men who cannot use a little strong language once in a while, particularly as it concerns enemies who say, "We will bury you" and "Your children will live under socialism;" who for a hundred years have had one purpose—to destroy us and the free world—I think we are farther down the road than we realize.¹¹

The general quickly became a figure of national stature as his supporters and opponents debated the propriety of political activities in the military. Moderate and liberal politicians, newspapers and magazines countered the arguments of Fisher, Goldwater and Thurmond by criticizing Walker's conduct and its potential dangers. *The Christian Century*, for instance, warned, "If we relax our vigilance and allow the virus of militarism to gain a foothold, as far too many people are ready to do, we shall drift into dictatorship." To avert such a disaster, the magazine cautioned, the secretary of defense had to "keep the armed forces out of the hands of divisive and potentially tyrannical elements in American society"—men like Ted Walker.¹²

Ultra-conservatism briefly flourished in the early 1960s, though not as a unified or homogenous movement. Its myriad constituencies advocated, among other things, the impeachment of Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren, the abolition of the federal income tax, a wholesale reduction in "big government" and social services, and the end of American military aid to Yugoslavia.¹³ But two clear and closely related themes were common in most far-right positions: a hatred of the "Communist conspiracy" and a love of all things truly "American." United by those two fundamental beliefs, the radical right defended Edwin Walker in 1961 and 1962 and elevated him (if only briefly) to national celebrity. In the process, this new wave of ultra-conservatism made its first real impact on national politics. The Walker controversy gave national exposure to part of the ultra-conservative movement three years before the presidential nomination of Barry Goldwater, the greatest success of the far right in the 1960s.

For many hard-line conservatives, the Walker case symbolized the country's vulnerability to Communism: incredibly, the government persecuted sincere, law-abiding Americans like the general and thus put the nation in jeopardy. Columnist Paul Harvey summed up the feeling in 1961:

Today the Reds and pinks are out in the open proclaiming their godless religion and waving a red flag or a mongrel one from the rooftops, and with such effectiveness and in such high places, that American patriots are now on the defensive.

Today the loyal American is being defamed, demoted, discharged, destroyed if he militantly defends the American "ism" against all its enemies, foreign and domestic.

Maj. Gen. "Ted" Walker is such a man . . .¹⁴

To the radical right, the Army's reprimand of Walker showed how the federal government—from the wartime agreements at Yalta through the "loss" of China and the botched Cuban invasion—still played into the hands of the Soviets. By punishing Walker, the Kennedy administration, staffed with "Harvards" and other "pinks," continued to follow an ineffectual and potentially disastrous Cold War foreign policy.

Like their ultra-conservative critics, the civilian leaders of the military viewed the Walker controversy within a framework of broader concerns. Most significantly, the Kennedy administration hoped to preserve one of the main underpinnings of the American experiment: the subordination of the military to civilian control. Walker himself might not have represented much of a threat to this traditional balance of power. Yet his attempt to use his military position to promote a partisan political agenda was not unique in the early 1960s. As the radical right gained strength, reports of the military's participation in ultra-conservative activities inundated the Pentagon. These seminars and programs, sometimes held at military facilities and usually featuring speakers from one or several branches of the armed services, focused on the threat of Communist subversion in the United States. In the process, they often directly questioned the policies of the Kennedy Administration.¹⁵ Like General Walker's "Pro-Blue" program, such meetings blurred the distinction between two spheres long kept separate in the United States, the political and the military. A threat to the concept of civilian control, the military's flirtations with ultra-conservative politics earned the consternation of President Kennedy. The president, then new to the office, took an interest in the Walker case and monitored the Pentagon's investigation until the crisis passed.

Driven to resign from the Army, Walker faded from public view but reappeared on the political fringe throughout the 1960s. He is perhaps best remembered for his connection to the Kennedy assassination: Lee Harvey Oswald reportedly shot at Walker in April, 1963, eight months before the president's death in Dallas. Yet an examination of Walker's political activities in Germany and their repercussions can provide a valuable glimpse of how Cold War tensions shaped public discourse at the dawn of the Kennedy era.

Ted Walker showed little promise at West Point. A native of Center Point, Texas, and graduate of the New Mexico Military Institute, he ranked in the bottom third of the USMA Class of 1931. 229th out of 296 cadets.¹⁶ To make matters worse, Walker graduated into a relatively peaceful world. After World War I, the country demobilized as quickly and completely as possible, leaving the military small and poorly equipped. Advancement within it was slow, particularly for men in the lower ranks. Officers ascended the command hierarchy as they proved themselves in combat, but there was little fighting in the dull years between the Great War and Pearl Harbor. Describing Dwight Eisenhower's painful experience of a decade earlier, when the young soldier found that his career in the military had stalled, Stephen Ambrose has

written: "He was getting nowhere, had no realistic prospects of personal advancement, but he was content. He accepted his role, concentrated on doing his assigned tasks to the best of his ability, and for the rest indulged his fun-loving nature."¹⁷ The same could have been said of Ted Walker after he left West Point. Trained in artillery, he bided his time by playing polo—he earned a spot on the U.S. Army team from 1934 to 1936—and soldiering at places like Fort Sam Houston in Texas, Fort Meyer in Virginia, and Fort Sill in Oklahoma.¹⁸ Mostly, though, he waited for war.

When war finally came, Walker made the most of his chance, collecting a shirtful of decorations for his service in Europe and, later, Asia: the Silver Star, the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the French *Croix de Guerre*, the Norwegian Order of St. Olav, the Order of the British Empire, and the Korean Ulchi Medal. During World War II he commanded Task Force A in Norway and the First Special Service Force in Germany and Italy. The unit specialized in paratroop-commando actions. According to *Time*, Walker "often blacked his face" and "led his troops on bloody night raids against German units in Italy."¹⁹ As Walker himself later described those combat experiences, he and his troops, "each individual . . . a dedicated fighting man," felt the "necessity for engaging the enemy with purpose—the purpose of destroying the enemy." In the summer of 1944, the unit successfully attacked a German garrison on the Heyeres Islands, located near the French Riviera and then considered a strategically critical area.²⁰ Finally given a chance to be a soldier, Walker bravely led his men on such missions.²¹

A story describing Walker's work with the Special Services speaks volumes about his approach to soldiering. The Army wanted to test Walker's parachuting skills before it allowed him to take over the unit, which was to engage in high-risk paratroop operations. But, trained in artillery, Walker knew little about parachuting; in fact, he never had made a jump. Just before his test, he was said to have approached a subordinate, indicated his parachute, and asked, "How do you put this thing on?" The soldier, dumbfounded, showed him, and delivered a brief tutorial on parachuting. Walker then calmly went up in the plane and made the required jump. On the ground, he greeted the test officer with his trademark response: "Check."²² It was vintage Ted Walker—brave and proud and bound by a sense of duty.

The "cold" war with the Soviets followed the "hot" war with the Nazis and Japanese. Although not engaged in direct, conventional warfare, the Americans and Soviets fought to control the shape of postwar Europe and Asia. Both sides used economic and military aid, immense propaganda efforts, and blunt coercion to protect their interests. Following a brief tour at the Army's Field Artillery School at Fort Sill, Ted Walker observed three critical battlegrounds in the early Cold War: Greece, Korea, and Formosa. More significant than the time spent at West Point in the late 1920s or in Europe during World War II, these experiences shaped Walker's political ideology, convincing him that Communism, promoted throughout the world by the Soviets, threatened the very existence of the republic.

Still in the United States after his tour in Oklahoma, Walker headed the Pentagon's "Greek desk" during the civil war in that country. President Truman, suspecting Soviet involvement, made aid to Greece the cornerstone of the Truman Doctrine. Rhetoric aside, the massive American economic and military aid program did not bolster "democratic" forces in Greece because, in truth, such forces did not really exist. (The United States aided a brutally repressive government in Greece, one so fraught with mismanagement, incompetence, and outright malevolence that even President Truman was compelled to describe it as "imperfect.") Rather, the United States sought to block the spread of Communism. Coupled with assistance to Turkey, also seemingly threatened by the Soviets, the American aid to Greece in 1947 marked a political watershed, beginning an epoch of massive and persistent spending abroad as a means of "containing" possible Soviet expansion. What started with Greece continued with NATO, Korea, Berlin, Viet Nam, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Chile. As Walter LaFeber has written, the President "used the American fear of communism both at home and abroad to convince Americans they must embark upon a Cold War foreign policy. This consensus would not break apart for a quarter of a century."²³ From his post at the Pentagon, where he served as a staff officer in the Army's Office of Chief of Staff, Walker monitored events in Greece and Turkey in those critical years and made at least one official visit to the Mediterranean.²⁴

After North Korean forces invaded South Korea in 1950, President Truman, who said he only wanted "to restore peace there and . . . restore the border," sent American forces to protect the government of Syngman Rhee and prevent the troops of Kim Il-Sung from overrunning the entire peninsula. Ted Walker was given command of the Seventh Regiment of the Third Infantry Division, because, as he later said, "I wanted a combat assignment." The fighting in Korea was protracted and bloody—the United States suffered 54,246 combat deaths and 103,284 casualties²⁵—and Walker saw some of the worst of it, including the bloodletting at Heartbreak Ridge. In addition to leading American troops in battle, Walker worked in a supervisory capacity with the South Korean army. (Eventually he rose to the post of senior advisor to the First Korean Corps.) He later said, "I worked long nights in a hut high in the mountains overlooking the beautiful Sea of Japan, helping my Korean friends build an army in our image." It was clear in Walker's mind that such aid to Rhee, whose right-wing alliances in South Korea had caused friction there, helped a "great anti-Communist patriot."²⁶

The last of Walker's immediate post-war assignments was on Formosa, where he served as a military advisor to Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalist leader defeated by the Chinese Communists after that nation's long civil war. For all his faults, Chiang was blessed with a corps of powerful and vocal friends in the United States, including publisher Henry Luce and several prominent senators and congressmen. This "China Lobby," outraged by the "loss" of China to Mao and determined to make up for the country's earlier foreign policy mistakes,

conceived of Chiang as a crucial bulwark against the spread of Communism in Asia. In retrospect, Chiang, corrupt and intransigent, had long been a special kind of burden for the United States in the Far East. Chiang's myriad faults became apparent when, in late 1954, the Chinese Communists threatened some of the small islands between Formosa and the mainland—Quemoy, Matsu, and the Tachens. In the words of Chou En-lai, an invasion of Taiwan was "imminent," with these small skirmishes presaging an all-out attack of the Nationalist stronghold itself. The situation grew increasingly tense in early 1955 after the Communists raided the Tachens by air and captured the nearby island of Ichiang. Frightened by these skirmishes, Chiang believed that there could be "war at any time" between the two old rivals after Mao ordered shelling of Quemoy and Matsu. The islands were barren and useless pieces of rock, but the question of their sovereignty brought the United States close to the brink of nuclear war.

President Eisenhower was not prepared to fight China over the disputed islands, but a 1954 agreement with Chiang bound the U.S. to intervene if Taiwan was attacked. And so the central question became: Were the attacks on Quemoy and Matsu a prelude to a war in which the United States would be obligated to participate? Ultimately, the answer was no, and the crisis passed without the eruption of a full-scale conflict between the United States and China. Yet the stakes had been enormous. Both Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had casually mentioned the deployment of nuclear weapons to defend Taiwan, the President even going so far as to say that he could see no reason why warheads "shouldn't be used just exactly as you would use a bullet or anything else."²⁷

Sometime in 1955, the year of the flare-up over Quemoy and Matsu, Walker went to Taiwan and served as an advisor to Chiang's military chief of staff. Of his various tours, this one remains the most obscure, earning little or no mention in the various short biographical sketches that appeared later in Walker's life. Walker himself once vaguely mentioned his service with Chiang by claiming that he "felt the effects of uncertain policy" while in Taiwan. But—and this is typical for many of his public statements—it is difficult to determine whose "policy" it was, what it related to, or why it was "uncertain." During the same speech, he also referred to the "recall of American advisors" who had been sent to help the Nationalists during the civil war. This "recall of advisors upon whom there was great reliance," combined with a shortage of ammunition (a problem that might have been rectified with more American aid), had discouraged Chiang's forces at a time when they "had been in combat readiness, anxious to engage a Communist enemy weakened by long, over-extended supply routes."²⁸ From these statements and Walker's general anti-Communist attitude, which strengthened as years passed, it seems likely that he would have welcomed forceful resolution to the Formosa crisis.

Walker's time in Korea and Formosa, coupled with the time he spent monitoring the Greek civil war, provided him an object lesson in military strategy. Most

simply put, he came to believe that the only real victory was total victory, the complete annihilation of the enemy and its power to wage war. Anything less represented a compromise that left the potential for further conflict and the possibility of defeat. Walker quoted Douglas MacArthur to emphasize this point: "There can be no compromise with atheistic Communism—no half-way in the preservation of freedom and religion. It must be all or nothing."²⁹ Given a chance, the Russians would take over the world, the dominoes falling one after the other: first Europe and Asia, then, inevitably, South America and the United States. For Walker, this was not a remote threat. Deep in his heart he believed that the Russians were on the march—and that the United States, the leader of the free world, simply *had* to stop their advance.

In Asia, though, the military had been reined in by Washington before it could achieve a total victory by eradicating Communism from either North Korea or China. That restriction, in Walker's view the "censorship" of the Army, had led to catastrophe. The bloody fighting in Korea had ended in what amounted to a stalemate. The United States had lost thousands of men in combat, but that sacrifice had merely restored the *status quo ante bellum*—a divided Korean, half Communist and half "free." One huge mistake had wrecked American chances: General MacArthur had been fired before he could take the conflict north of the Yalu River and into China, the core of the problem in Asia. To defeat Communism and ensure "freedom," Walker believed, the United States had to capitalize on such strategic opportunities.

The behavior of American GIs captured by the Chinese also showed Walker—whose service record included a notation for his service as "dep. chief staff for prisoner of war affairs 8th Army"—and others the important psychological dimension to the Cold War. To the embarrassment of the Pentagon, several American prisoners broke down and submitted to "brainwashing" while in the enemy's hands. (Adding to the Army's shame was the fact that they had not tried to escape beforehand.) Secretary McNamara, then working at Ford Motors, claimed to have "heard with amazement the story of prisoners who had cracked and become informers; men who had cooperated with their captors."³⁰ According to journalist Fred J. Cook, the Army, "probing the causes for our sorry performance, decided that U.S. troops had not appreciated the cause for which they were fighting; they had not sufficiently understood the evils and dangers of Communism."³¹ As McNamara put it, "These American soldiers did not understand the Communist threat."³² Mentally weak or unprepared, the soldiers—supposedly the strongest and toughest men that the country had to offer—caved in and accepted Communist dogma.

In response to the Chinese "brainwashings," the National Security Council and the Pentagon issued classified directives and policy statements to encourage top military officials, in the words of a *New York Times* report, "to take positive measures to alert the troops under their command and the public at large to the issues of national security and the 'cold war.'"³³ Thereafter, the military spread pro-American and anti-Communist propaganda

to soldiers as well as the public at large. McNamara later told the Senate Armed Services Committee that he and other Pentagon officials, as a matter of policy,

welcome participation by the Defense Department military and civilian officials as speakers on military subjects at meetings organized by responsible private groups to discuss the menace of communism, Communist plans for worldwide domination. We believe that our officials possess a special knowledge which can make an important contribution to such occasions. . . .³⁴

Ted Walker, appalled by the behavior of the American POWs and horrified by the thought of a Communist victory in the Cold War, believed that such measures were a vital component of the nation's preparedness program.

Walker, however, remained a relatively obscure figure until 1957, when the Pentagon gave him command of the Arkansas Military District. There he emerged as a central figure in the Little Rock Central High School desegregation crisis. President Eisenhower, confronted by an intransigent Governor Orval Faubus and what Stephen Ambrose has called a "howling racist mob" outside the high school itself, nationalized the Arkansas National Guard to protect the handful of African-American students who hoped to attend the previously all-white school. To show the seriousness of his message and to further discourage segregationist forces in the city, the President reluctantly ordered Maxwell Taylor, Chief of Staff of the Army, to dispatch federal troops as well, including a thousand paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division. Southerners like Senator James Eastland claimed that Eisenhower had tried "to destroy the social order of the South" by using the Army. Senator Richard Russell went a step further, admonishing Eisenhower for the "highhanded and illegal methods being employed by the United States under your command who are carrying out your orders to mix the races in the public schools of Little Rock." Even some moderates, like Senator Lyndon Johnson, were disturbed. Yet Eisenhower held firm and the troops remained. Walker commanded them.³⁵

He protested the deployment of federal troops in Little Rock. Working through what he later called "appropriate military channels," Walker "repeatedly urged that responsibility be restored" to the local National Guard Units. "I had hoped and prayed," he said, "that the Army would not become involved in that non-military issue" (the integration of the Little Rock public schools). He believed that the use of federal troops showed how "special interest groups [had] prevailed upon civilian leaders to employ our military forces on non-military adventures" and that "[f]rom the vantage of the military, it often appears that some positions of authority are not adequately prepared to coordinate civilian and military security measures."³⁶ Despite Walker's protests, the troops stayed in place, and he commanded them until the crisis in Little Rock passed.

Enforcing a policy that he loathed, Walker performed capably at Little Rock, and the national press

generally treated him well. *The New York Times* and other publications featured Walker as a rugged, no-nonsense commander—"tough but fair," as one account put it. Walker, after all, responded to reports of scuffles outside the high school by saying, "There will be none when I get through." And he bravely walked into Little Rock Central to speak to the students about the Supreme Court and its "authoritative interpretation of the Constitution." Whether or not the students and their parents agreed with the Court, he wanted order at the high school. Walker warned that anyone attempting to "interfere or disrupt the proper administration of the school will be removed by the soldiers on duty and turned over to the local police for disposition in accordance with the laws of your community."³⁷

But even in this speech, reprinted in full in *The New York Times* and quoted extensively elsewhere, Walker's misgivings were apparent. He sounded like a reluctant warrior, telling the crowd that his troops "are here because they have been ordered here"—and not, presumably, because they really *wanted* to be there. Walker said of his own role as commander, "As an officer of the United States Army, I have been chosen to command these forces and to execute the President's orders." This was hardly a ringing defense of the integration policy, and as the speech went on Walker only sounded more disaffected. The Supreme Court had interpreted the Constitution, the commander said, and the citizens of Arkansas were bound to follow the implications of that ruling because "we are governed by laws, properly decided upon by duly constituted authority . . ." Walker, offering his best justification for integration, asserted that "we are all subject to all the laws, whether we approve of them personally or not, and as law-abiding citizens, have an obligation in conscience to obey them."³⁸

Soured by his experience at Little Rock, paranoiacally afraid of Communism and determined to fight subversion through private means, Walker tried to leave the Army in August, 1959. Walker explained his decision in a resignation letter that he later made public:

It is fair to say that in my opinion the 5th column conspiracy and influence in the United States minimize or nullify the effectiveness of my ideals and principles, military mission and objectives, and the necessary American public spirit to support sons and soldiers. I have no further desire for military service at this time with this conspiracy and its influences on the home front.³⁹

In effect, he wanted to leave the service because he thought it inadequate for fighting Communism. The Pentagon refused to accept the letter. In fact, it assigned Walker to command the 24th Infantry Division of the Seventh Army, a unit stationed on the front line of the Cold War. After attempting to resign, Ted Walker packed his bags and headed to Augsburg, Germany.

Walker commanded the 24th Division for about a year and a half: he arrived in the fall of 1959 and left in early 1961. Following nearly three decades in the service, his post in Germany should have been the capstone of a solid if not distinguished career. Instead, Walker's brief

tour in Europe ended with his resignation from the service and return home to civilian life in Texas. Shaped by his experiences in the United States and abroad, the general's fierce anti-Communism—and the bewildered response of his Army subordinates, colleagues, and superiors—dominated his command of the 24th Division. It also directly led to Walker's humiliating resignation from the service.

From the beginning of Walker's tour in Germany, the officers and enlisted men of the 24th Division marvelled at his hatred of the Soviets. Guest of honor at an officers' club party, the new commander launched into what one of those present later termed "a sort of arrival address." Before Walker finished his speech—an appraisal of the battle against Communism—some of the men looked sideways at each other and smirked. His address seemed hyperbolic. Later, as the men danced with their wives and mulled over Walker's speech, they tapped one another on the shoulder and asked, "What was he talking about?"⁴⁰

Walker did not confine his anti-Communist rhetoric to the 24th Division: he also gave formal and informal talks in Augsburg and surrounding towns. In January, 1960, for instance, he addressed a crowd of 200 gathered for a PTA meeting. There Walker openly questioned the loyalty of Harry Truman, Eleanor Roosevelt, and former Secretary of State Dean Acheson. According to the Army's report, Walker said that all three "were leftist influenced or affiliated;"⁴¹ the *Overseas Weekly*, a private newspaper covering Army issues in Germany, quoted Walker's description as "definitely pink." The *Weekly* also reported that Walker called Edward R. Murrow, Walter Lippmann, and Eric Sevareid, all noted liberal journalists, "confirmed communists." The *New York Times* quoted an unnamed member of the PTA audience who remembered the general's precise description of the journalists as "very, very left." Whatever his exact language, Walker—in uniform and speaking to civilians and Army personnel—openly questioned the patriotism of at least six prominent Americans, including one former president and the wife of another. His PTA speech included other surprising claims. According to the *Overseas Weekly*, he argued that sixty percent of the American media was controlled or heavily influenced by Communists.

The *Times* source also remembered Walker "mention-[ing] the John Birch Society as a patriotic organization that was doing great work." Another source quoted in the same story recalled that Walker referred to having attended meetings of "a small group that was small to keep it anonymous."⁴² Speaking to the PTA group, Walker apparently did not admit to being a member of the John Birch Society. Yet the connection between the "patriotic organization" and his "small group" seems clear.

Robert Welch founded the John Birch Society in 1958, Walker's last full year in the United States. (The group's name honored an army intelligence officer and Baptist missionary killed by the Communist Chinese ten days after the end of World War II.) Welch explained the Society's thinking in simple terms: "Our enemy is the Communist—nobody else." Most JBS positions centered

on the idea that "big government" bred despotism and un-Americanism. As Welch argued, "The greatest enemy of man is, and always has been, government; and the larger, more extensive that government, the greater the enemy." He believed that men "must be self-reliant" and not look to the federal government for hand-outs such as welfare or Medicare. As the funding source for such programs, the federal income tax infuriated the Birchers. (They went to so far as to establish the Organization for the Repeal of the Federal Income Tax in 1966.) The JBS also established committees opposing sex education in public schools, "forced integration" of the races, and gun control.⁴³

Though far outside the political mainstream, the JBS must have appealed to Ted Walker. He had seen the evils of Communism first-hand, observing the Greek civil war, fighting in Korea, and helping the Nationalists remain viable on Formosa. In Little Rock, Walker also had witnessed—and unwillingly helped—the destructive influence of "special interest groups" in political decision-making. Such experiences fostered his anti-Communism and suspicion of a liberal "big government"—two bedrock sentiments of the JBS. The Army's investigation of Walker's political activities in Germany revealed that he belonged to the Birch Society, so it seems possible that the general referred to his membership when he recalled his "small group."

Walker's PTA speech comprised only a small part of his broader effort to warn soldiers and civilians about the menace of Communism. While in Germany he formulated a systematic propaganda campaign. In the fall of 1960, for instance, the general obtained a "voting index" from the Americans for Constitutional Action. Complementing the Birch Society, the ACA lobbied for the "progressive repeal of the socialistic laws now on our books," including "compulsory participation in Social Security, mandatory wage rates, compulsory membership in labor organizations, fixed rent controls, restrictions on choice of tenants and purchasers of one's property."⁴⁴ Hoping to influence the 1960 congressional elections, the ACA prepared and distributed a spiral-bound "index" of House and Senate voting records. Unlike the *Congressional Record*, this document did not impartially list the "yes" or "no" votes cast by senators and congressmen. Instead, the ACA prepared nine separate and highly subjective indices to gauge their performance (with 100 being the highest possible "score" and 0 being the lowest). Among the headings:

- For Sound Money and Against Inflation Index
- For Economy and Conservation and Against Waste Index
- For Private-Competitive Market and Against Government Interference Index
- For Local Self-Government and Against Central Government Intervention Index
- National Security Index
- For Individual Liberty and Against Coercion Index
- For Private Ownership and Against Government Ownership and Control of the Means of Production and Distribution Index

How severe was the hard-line conservative bias of the ACA document? According to a speech delivered on the floor of the House of Representatives by Morris Udall, the ACA rated John Kennedy's performance in the Senate with marks of: "0" (in the "For Private Ownership" index); 11 (in "Individual Liberty"); and 0 (in "National Security"). Even Barry Goldwater, the champion of the Republican Party's right wing and its candidate for the presidency in 1964, only scored 98 on the ACA's summary index.⁴⁵

Prior to the elections of November, 1960, Walker obtained the ACA Index and encouraged his troops to examine it before casting their absentee ballots. In an article published in the *Taro Leaf*, the division newspaper, the general advised his men that "one of the easiest ways of determining your Senator's or Congressman's record is by consulting the ACA Index." (Walker included the command's phone number, Flak M813, to make it easier for the men to access the various indices.) He assured the troops that the index was "carefully prepared by the nonpartisan" ACA; in Walker's article, the ultra-conservative organization seemed as benign and impartial as the League of Women Voters. Walker's article also linked the soldiers' ballots and his anti-communist crusade. The general wrote, "When the American public understands the relationship of congressional voting records to national security, the cause of freedom will be revitalized."⁴⁶

As the later Army investigation proved, Walker made a grievous mistake when he turned his attention to the 1960 elections. By attempting to use his "official authority or influence to affect the course of an election or to influence a member of the Armed Forces in his vote for a candidate for election," Walker violated the Hatch Act and three separate Army regulations, AR600-10, AR608-20, and AR 355-5. Moreover, he violated the sections of the United States Code paralleling the Hatch Act, those "impos[ing] criminal penalties for interfering with or affecting elections." Testifying later in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Secretary of Defense McNamara referred to these transgressions while describing how Walker "attempted to influence" the voting of members of the 24th Infantry Division and their spouses.⁴⁷ Few believed Walker's claim that the ACA Index had been prepared by a "nonpartisan" group; he clearly had used his capacity as an officer in the Army to promote ultra-conservative candidates in the 1960 elections. Of all the charges leveled at Walker, these were among the most serious, and he never effectively refuted them.

Another part of Walker's indoctrination effort—what the *Overseas Weekly* called a "propaganda barrage"—involved bringing to Augsburg men like Edgar C. Bundy, a former Army intelligence officer from Wheaton, Illinois. In numerous speeches and books, Bundy, then head of the National Christian Layman's League, advocated right-wing causes. At Walker's invitation, he spent a week in Germany and addressed the troops of the 24th Division. Like the general in his PTA speech, Bundy questioned the patriotism of Eleanor Roosevelt, claiming that she belonged to a number of Communist-front groups. According to the Army's final report on Walker,

Bundy also said that "large numbers of Protestant ministers were Communists or Communist dupes." (His book on the subject, *Collectivism in the Churches*, reported Communist infiltration of the Federal Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. Walker made the text available to his troops.) Such talks, delivered by ultra-conservatives who had no formal affiliation with the Army, were common during Walker's tenure in Germany.⁴⁸

The general's "Pro-Blue" program attracted the most attention in "the Walker case." He began to develop it in the fall of 1960. Before then, Walker apparently had not codified his approach to anti-Communism. Cold War rhetoric dominated his speeches and writings in the *Taro Leaf*, but until early 1961 the general had not translated it into division policy. (There had been a "citizenship in service" program developed under Walker's guidance, but its exact contents remain unclear. The wife of a serviceman claimed that it attempted "to inculcate moral and legal responsibility, to teach fundamental principles of citizenships and patriotism, and to motivate members of the command so as to reduce sociological stress and service and generate a desire for the awards of self-discipline. . . .")⁴⁹ The general developed a more formal policy as he settled into his Augsburg post and assembled a team of loyal subordinates. Among them were master sergeant Tom Flynn, who had once headed the Veterans of Wars' Americanism program in Illinois, and major Arch E. Roberts.

According to a letter written by Roberts, Walker's staff met with the general in October, 1960, to develop the comprehensive indoctrination program. Roberts claimed that Walker approved the name "pro-blue" in order to emphasize the effort's "anti-red" message. (Another defender of Walker explained the choice a little differently, citing the distinction between friend—blue—and enemy—red—troops on most battle maps.) In the words of Representative O.C. Fisher, who received the letter, Roberts also reported that Walker "had never even heard of the John Birch Society" when he laid plans for the Pro-Blue program. This disclaimer probably was meant to discount the similarity between the name of the patriotism effort and the Birch Society "Blue Book."⁵⁰

Unveiling the Pro-Blue program in the division's Circular #350-20, Walker announced on January 4, 1961, "It is in all aspects a pro-Freedom cause . . . a positive approach toward the defeat of open Communist subversion of the American way of life based on the Constitution, belief in God, and freedom of man." The program's educational goals were divided into several sub-sections, including: "Origins of American culture," "The American military moral heritage," and "Politics, U.S.A." There also were several headings regarding Communism. Through the Pro-Blue plan, Walker hoped to "educate military personnel and their dependents in the technique of Communist infiltration, subversion and propaganda in influencing legal governments, seizing power, then ruling through brutality and fear." Not even the military was safe from the Communist threat "to subvert military morale, esprit, prestige and leadership." To fight off these potential dangers, the men of the 24th

Division and their dependents would have to uphold "American moral forces and precepts of individual dignity, the preciousness of every human soul, and the obligations of the conscientious citizen to his God, to his country, and to himself."

Walker provided a long reading list to guide his men through the program. The general recommended texts on topics as diverse as religion, education, mass communication, propaganda, labor, and the Soviet Union; they had been produced by the government, individual authors, and private organizations. There were reports, periodicals, memoirs, exposes, confessions, and tracts. All were profoundly conservative. Among Walker's choices:

McCarthyism, The Fight For America, by Joseph McCarthy
Spies, Dupes, and Diplomats, by Ralph de Toledano
The Yalta Betrayal, by Felix Wittmer
Masters of Deceit, by J. Edgar Hoover
Witness, by Whittaker Chambers
The Naked Communist, by Cleon Skousen
Brainwashing in the High School, by E. Merrill Root
The Techniques of Communism, by Louis Bundenz
I Saw Poland Betrayed, by Arthur Bliss Lane
Black Book on Red China, by Edward Hunter
The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes, by Alexander Orlov

The general also encouraged his men to scan the transcripts of the Army-McCarthy hearings, the Owen Lattimore investigation, and the Alger Hiss case.⁵¹

Walker's military career began to unravel before he distributed the Pro-Blue program to the troops of the 24th Division. Twice in late 1960, according to the later testimony of Secretary McNamara, the commanding general of the Army's VII Corps warned the general "against extending his activities into political and related controversial areas." A third warning would be delivered in March, 1961, by the commanding general of the entire Seventh Army.⁵² Walker ignored those admonitions and refused to temper his speeches or scuttle plans for the indoctrination program.

A confrontation between Walker and Siegfried Naujocks, reporter for the *Overseas Weekly*, further damaged the general. After learning that Walker had sought medical attention for recurrent headaches, Naujocks apparently told soldiers of the 24th Division that he knew the root cause of the general's sometimes erratic behavior: Walker, according to Naujocks, suffered from a brain tumor. The *Weekly* never published the allegation, which proved to be baseless, but Walker nonetheless banned Naujocks from the Division's barracks on December 28, 1960.⁵³ Such disagreements were common throughout the stormy history of the *Overseas Weekly*, a private newspaper sold at Army newsstands. Lieutenant general Charles Bolte, then commander of the Army forces in Europe, had barred the *Weekly* from Army newsstands in the summer of 1953. He allowed the paper to return shortly thereafter, but the tension between the publication and the Army remained almost constant throughout the rest of the decade. At least three European commanders after Bolte—Henry I. Hodes, Clyde

Eddleman, and Bruce Clarke—expressed their personal disdain for the paper. (Even Bob McNamara claimed to "find it repulsive.")⁵⁴

The *Overseas Weekly's* salacious coverage disturbed the Army. At various times its pages featured horrific murders, adultery, prostitution, fights, photographs of young women in skimpy bathing suits, drug usage, drunkenness, rape—anything gross and fascinating enough to sell. The paper also delighted in embarrassing the American Army in Germany, usually by reporting the details of lurid courts-martial. An Army report categorized the *Weekly's* approach to the news: "the editorial policy has been and continues to be one of emphasis upon crime, sex and maladministration of the military."⁵⁵ The *Army Times* complained that it consistently depicted "the American soldier as rowdy, disorderly, dishonest, and immoral" and thus helped "anti-American forces in their campaign to disunite NATO." With some justification, many of the troops in Germany knew the paper as the "Oversexed Weekly," and they bought it in droves.⁵⁶ Its publishers reported that the *Overseas Weekly* had a circulation of roughly 50,000 readers in Germany.⁵⁷

Stung by the banishment of Naujocks, the *Overseas Weekly* retaliated against Walker. In a story dated April 16, 1961 (but available at newsstands three days earlier), "Military Channels Used to Push Birch Ideas," the paper reported:

Augsburg—For the past year the 24th Infantry Division has been exposed to a propaganda barrage on the philosophy of the controversial John Birch Society. The principles of the ultraconservative, self-styled anti-Communist society have been published to the 13,000 men and 10,000 dependents of the division by its special warfare office which directs the pro-blue program.

The special warfare office and the pro-blue campaign were established by the division commander, Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker, at a meeting last October 15 . . .

The story went on to cite Walker's inflammatory PTA speech; his distribution of Robert Welch's *Life of John Birch* and *American Opinion*, the magazine of the Birch Society; and the warning he issued at the meeting introducing the Pro-Blue program. According to the *Weekly*, Walker had claimed, "Communism has infiltrated every institution in the United States in an attempt to overthrow our way of life."⁵⁸

The story of Walker's indoctrination program soon crossed the Atlantic. Within days of the *Overseas Weekly* report, *The New York Times* headlined a front-page story, "BIRCH UNIT IDEAS PUT TO U.S. TROOPS."⁵⁹ Responding to the newspaper reports, Walker initially said that the statements attributed to him by the *Overseas Weekly* were "untrue." He also disavowed the purported connection between the Pro-Blue program and the Birch Society, stating, "The program is not associated or affiliated with any organization or society."⁶⁰ After making these temperate denials, Walker suggested that the paper's history of "bad effects" had somehow cost the country "hundreds of millions of dollars." From Garmisch, Germany, where

he had gone to fish, the general charged: "We have Communists and we have the *Overseas Weekly*. Neither one is one of God's blessings to the American people or their soldier sons overseas. Immoral, unscrupulous, corrupt and destructive are terms that could be applied to either." The paper argued that Walker had resorted to "slander" and "pinning labels on everything with which he personally disagrees."⁶¹

The Pentagon then entered the dispute. According to an account later published by the Conservative Society of America, a radical right group based in New Orleans, Walker, while on his fishing excursion to Garmisch, received a phone call from Arthur Sylvester. Sylvester, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, questioned Walker about the possible connection between the Birch Society and the Pro-Blue program.

Walker asked, "What are you referring to? The allegations contained in the *Overseas Weekly*?"

"I am referring to allegations that you called former president Truman a pink."

"That is not true."

"Did you say that Mr. Dean Acheson is a pink?"

"No."

But when asked about other aspects of the PTA speech, such as his alleged comments on the American media, Walker conceded "that [I] might have characterized them as leftist oriented." Walker also admitted that he had called Eleanor Roosevelt a "pink."

Between questions, Sylvester referred to President Kennedy's interest in the Pro-Blue controversy. At one point he told the general, "I'm calling for the President."⁶² A week later, at his April 22 press conference, the President was asked a point-blank question about Walker and the John Birch Society. He appeared to have a low opinion of the ultra-conservative group:

Well, I don't think that their judgments are based on accurate information of the kinds of challenges that we face. I think we face an extremely serious and intensified struggle with the Communists. But I am not sure that the John Birch Society is wrestling with the real problems which are created by the Communist advance around the world.

Kennedy hoped that "all those concerned about the advance of Communism" would focus on substantive issues "and not concern themselves with the loyalty of President Eisenhower, President Truman or Mrs. Roosevelt or myself or someone else."⁶³

As the Walker controversy erupted, Kennedy faced the first real crisis of his presidency. A group of CIA-backed counter-revolutionaries landed at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba on April 17, 1961. Military and intelligence advisers assured the new president that the anti-Castro forces would spark a popular uprising and liberate Cuba. Instead, the invasion proved to be an unmitigated disaster. Poorly trained and equipped, the rebels attempted to establish a beachhead in an untenable position; most of the men were either killed or captured, and no counter-revolution took place. Kennedy took public responsibility for the rout, but privately he complained, "All my life I've

known better than to depend on the experts. How could I have been so stupid, to let them go ahead?"⁶⁴

The Cuban disaster illustrated the President's mounting problem with the military. In the first months of Kennedy's term, the Pentagon received reports of active and retired military personnel participating in "seminars" sponsored by right-wing groups. As Daniel Bell described the phenomenon, "In almost every area of the country, seminars, schools, and projects, organized by the military or by business groups in cooperation with the military, spread the propaganda of the radical right and gave a broad aura of authority and legitimacy to such propaganda . . ."⁶⁵ A "Fourth Dimensional Warfare Seminar," held in Pittsburgh on April 15, attracted scores of military personnel, including retired admiral Chester Ward. Ward told an audience that "some of the advisers now surrounding the President"—in this context he later mentioned Adlai Stevenson, American ambassador to the United Nations, and George Kennan, American ambassador to Yugoslavia—had approaches to diplomacy "that would chill the average American." That same month in Minneapolis, the Naval Air Station at Wold-Chamberlain Field hosted "Project Action," a seminar featuring anti-Communist literature, films, and lectures by two Soviet defectors. A "Project Action" brochure claimed, "The program of talks and presentations by nationally known leaders of the cause for democracy will bring to light facts and figures concerning the rising crime rate, juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, the general degeneration of morals" and other social ills, all of them caused by the "Communist conspiracy."⁶⁶

Describing eleven ultra-conservative seminars staged with military supervision or cooperation, Senator J. William Fulbright cited the predominance of "extremely radical right-wing speakers and/or materials." He wrote to Secretary McNamara:

The content no doubt has varied from program to program, but running through all of them is a central theme that the primary, if not exclusive, danger to this country is internal Communist infiltration. Past and current international difficulties are often attributed to this, or ascribed to "softness," "appeasements," etc. Radical right-wing speakers dominate the programs.

The Arkansas Senator, a Democrat and ally of the Kennedy Administration, also concluded that many ultra-conservatives equated moderate social legislation, such as efforts to improve the Social Security system, with socialism. Given this warped understanding, the ultra-conservatives might view portions of the Kennedy domestic program, as Fulbright put it, "as steps toward communism."⁶⁷ When the radical right used the military to disseminate its views, the armed forces implied that civilian leaders were subversives. Arthur Sylvester admitted that "this sort of activity by representatives of the Defense Department has been a disturbing problem for us."⁶⁸

Part of the blame lay with the Pentagon itself. Responding to the embarrassing behavior of American POWs in Korea, the National Security Council and the Defense Department issued directives to military com-

manders encouraging the dissemination of anti-Communist propaganda. At the time, the policy had seemed reasonable, but by 1961 some of the propaganda activities had spiraled out of control. Military personnel were not simply inculcating loyalty in their troops—a few were openly questioning the Pentagon's handling of the Cold War. To compound the problem, they encouraged fears of "fifth columns" and domestic subversion, undermining the power of civilian authorities. As a Pentagon source quoted in *The New York Times* summarized the issue:

The real problem is one of proportion. Nearly every reasonable official I know of thinks that the real war against communism has to be fought in the international arena [because the nature of the dispute is] political, diplomatic, economic and in a limited sense, military. That, certainly, is the way the official policies of this Government are geared.

When, as these fellows do, you change the target to looking for spies under the bed or in the P.T.A., you divert that much energy and support away from the main objective of the "cold war." And at the same time, you instill fear and distrust of our Government and its leader.⁶⁹

Developed to secure a victory in the Cold War, the propaganda programs had become counter-productive.

With both President Kennedy and the Pentagon troubled by the political activities of military personnel, the Army investigated the charges against Ted Walker. Under the direction of Lieutenant General Fred Brown, commanding general of the Fifth Army Corps at Frankfurt, the Army prepared its voluminous report in April and May of 1961, interviewing Walker at length and collecting testimony from others involved in the Pro-Blue program. Elvis Stahr, Jr., Army secretary, announced that "pending the outcome of [this] official investigation" into "certain published statements and actions of General Walker," the general would be transferred from his command to the service's headquarters in Heidelberg, where he would serve as deputy chief of staff for operations.⁷⁰ Temporarily relieved of his command and assigned to a desk job, Walker understood his fate: he wouldn't return to Augsburg to lead the 24th Division. In a farewell note to his troops, the general predicted, "I will not see you."⁷¹

The Brown report doomed Ted Walker's career in the United States Army. As thick as a Manhattan telephone directory, the document basically confirmed the charges made against the general in the *Overseas Weekly*. Although "the detailed evidence in this respect is not developed and it is noticed that many of the witnesses, at the time of the investigation, were already claiming recollection difficulties," Brown argued that "the file" on Walker's activities in Augsburg contained "an overall indication of Hatch Act and related violations." The report singled out the Americans for Constitutional Action voting indices and Walker's vituperative PTA speech as clear violations of military and civil codes. It also cited the general's failure to heed the warnings of his superior officers. In describing the Pro-Blue program and its relationship to the John Birch Society, however, Brown

waffled. He revealed that Walker was in fact a member of the group "due to a basic similarity in approach to anti-communism." (Brown joked, "I really believe he regards Welch as a novice in the field of anti-communism.") And after poring over documents from the 24th Division, he came to believe that the Pro-Blue and John Birch propaganda programs were "remarkably similar" in content and form. Yet Brown reported that the resemblance between Walker's indoctrination effort—headed by a John Bircher, containing material provided by the John Birch Society, and closely resembling JBS programs—and that of the ultraconservative group was simply "coincidental." The two were "circumstantially, and possibly incidentally, similar,"⁷² but somehow not one and the same.

The most telling passages of the Brown report centered on Walker's personality and ideological development. Citing the general's combat record and obvious loyalty, Brown carefully praised Ted Walker as a soldier. From West Point, World War II, and Korea to Formosa, Little Rock, and, for a time, Augsburg, Walker had proven his bravery. Brown wrote that such service showed Walker to be "a sincere, deeply religious, patriotic soldier, dedicated to the nation and the Army." Yet Brown also described the general as someone whose genuine commitments to God and country had been distorted by right-wing politics. Brown called Walker an "eccentric" who "is not only violently anti-Communist but has been for years, working at it with a passion, studying, lecturing, and reading all literature available on the subject." This immersion in anti-Communism had formed the basis for Walker's behavior in Augsburg. Brown summarized the general's approach:

The situation is so urgent that "no holds are barred" in which whether a soldier is motivated or impressed by facts, propaganda or inspiration, is immaterial, as long as he is impressed with a hatred of Communism and knowledge (suspicion) of Communist influence in every aspect of American life.

In Brown's estimation, Walker had matured into a zealot obsessed with anti-Communism. As the report put it, "He sees all aspects of American life in relation to Communism—citizenship, politics, relations between states and the United States Government, social welfare, civil rights, religion, and the conduct of the soldier."⁷³

The Army's investigator mentioned the possibility of prosecution but did not recommend a trial. Brown wrote, "It is obvious that any trial for such violations would be a most difficult and prolonged undertaking, fraught with intense and emotional publicity, certainly unfavorable to the Government, at least in part."⁷⁴ Walker had caused the Army enough trouble, and there was no sense in prolonging the Pentagon's discomfort. As a result of the Brown report, however, Walker received an "admonishment" from the Army, the lightest form of military sanction. (The reprimand was oral rather than written, and no note of it was made in Walker's record.) In announcing the sanction, Bruce C. Clark, Commander in Chief of the Army forces in Europe, said, "No one can question General Walker's sincerity of purpose, but his actions

exceeded the limits of propriety for an officer of the Army." Undaunted, Walker responded to his punishment by claiming that he would continue to work "in the best interest of America and the fight for freedom, duty, honor and country." The findings of the Brown report, he said, "do not restrict efforts in these areas."⁷⁵

Before the Brown investigation, Walker had planned to return stateside to command the Army's VII Corps in Austin, Texas, a city not far from his childhood home in Center Point. The Pentagon changed the assignment after Brown made his report, and Walker, fuming, stayed in Heidelberg throughout the summer of 1961.⁷⁶ From Germany he tried to protect himself from criticism levelled by American politicians and journalists. Many conservatives backed Walker. But a large group of liberals and moderates supported the Pentagon and drubbed the general. Wisconsin Senator William Proxmire called him a "pitifully misguided general" and urged that the fight against Communism be left to "intelligent people, not morons."⁷⁷ In a more sober tone, *The New York Times* editorialized:

Maj. Gen. Edwin A. Walker did something worse than merely make absurd statements attributing Communist activity to prominent Americans while he was commanding the Twenty-fourth Infantry Division in Germany. He violated the long and sound tradition that active military personnel should keep away from anything remotely looking like political commentary.

The paper warned, "Officers on active service and politics do not mix."⁷⁸ In lauding Robert McNamara's handling of the Walker affair, *The Christian Century* reminded its readers, "It is the duty of the secretary of defense to keep the armed forces out of the hands of divisive and potentially tyrannical elements in American society."⁷⁹ Such reactions to the Walker controversy were typical. Americans wanted their military men to be like Dwight Eisenhower—loyal and honest, but also blandly non-partisan—and not Barry Goldwater.

Responding to public criticism, Walker quit the Army. He believed that the military, crippled by the leadership of soft-headed civilians in Washington, no longer could safeguard national security. As he had explained in attempting to resign after the Little Rock desegregation crisis, Walker believed that to be a truly effective anti-Communist, he had to function independently. In a long statement prepared for the Senate Armed Services Committee, which had recently heard Robert McNamara's explanation of the Brown report, Walker wrote, "I take leave of military duty with a heavy heart. I must find other means of serving my country in the time of her great need, in order to pursue the dedication of a lifetime." To continue this quest, he continued, "I must be free from the power of little men who, in the name of my country, punish loyal service to it." Walker's message was clear by the end of document: "It will be my purpose now, as a civilian, to attempt to do what I have found it no longer possible to do in uniform."⁸⁰

After his retirement, Ted Walker remained in public view. The course of his life, to borrow from the Army's Brown report, only could be described as eccentric. After

losing in the 1962 Texas gubernatorial primaries, Walker traveled to Oxford, Mississippi, and became embroiled in the Ole Miss desegregation crisis. The irony of the situation was too plain to miss: the former commander of the federal troops at Little Rock in 1957 was arrested—although not convicted—five years later for fomenting insurrection during the Oxford anti-integration riots. (In custody, he told reporters, "They don't have a thing on me.") Released by federal marshals, he was forced to undergo psychiatric examinations.⁸¹ Several months later, a gunman shot at Walker as he sat in the living room of his Dallas home. The Warren Commission suggested that Lee Harvey Oswald, President Kennedy's reputed assassin, fired at Walker. In 1965, he took a libel suit against the Associated Press to the United States Supreme Court (and lost). Walker later established himself as a fixture in Texas ultraconservative politics. When George Wallace's presidential campaign swung through the state in 1968, the former general greeted him at the Dallas airport; when Wallace was shot while running for the presidency in 1972, Walker held a prayer vigil for him.⁸²

In the few histories in which he appears, Ted Walker, burdened by this strange resume, stands out as a minor demagogue: a right-wing extremist lobbing grenades from the political fringe. If this characterization rings true, however, it does so at the risk of ignoring the broad, substantive forces that shaped his political ideology. A series of formative experiences, beginning with his military training as a young man and continuing through his combat tours and stateside assignments, deeply affected Walker's conception of the threat posed to the United States by the Soviet Union. An entire generation of Americans shared similar experiences. They fought in the European and Asian wars or supported those who did, then wondered whether those struggles had been worth the cost. The country prospered, but was fraught with fear that its hard-won security could be lost in a blinding instant. Ted Walker responded to those insecurities—and they were felt by both liberals and conservatives alike—not by building a bomb shelter in his back yard or training schoolchildren to dive under their desks in civil defense drills. Relying on his military experiences, he attempted warn as many men, women and children as he could reach that the Soviets would obliterate the American Way of Life unless honorable people stood firm and protected the country. Making his desperate case, Walker went to incautious, illegal extremes, smashing both laws and traditions, defying the organization to which he had devoted his life, and in the end exposing himself to national ridicule. A true believer in anti-Communist dogma, Ted Walker lost all restraint and surrendered to single-minded fanaticism. But in an era of ultra-conservative groups like the John Birch Society and the presidential candidacies of Barry Goldwater and George Wallace, he was hardly an uncommon or solitary figure. Extreme, perhaps, but not unique.

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NOTES

- ¹ Strom Thurmond, "The Walker Case: Thurmond's View," *The New York Times Magazine*, January 14, 1962: 81.
- ² *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 87th Congress, First Session (Hearings on Senate Resolution 191)*, September 6 and 7, 1961, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961: 6.
- ³ "Blunt Instrument," *Newsweek*, September 18, 1961: 29.
- ⁴ *The Congressional Record*, Volume 107 (87th Congress, First Session), Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1962:A4310.
- ⁵ *The New York Times*, September 21, 1961: 12.
- ⁶ *The Congressional Record*, Volume 107: A3103.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*: A7252.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*: A2785.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*: Part 16, 21220.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*: Part 11, 14197.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*: Part 11, 14174.
- ¹² *The Christian Century*, September 20, 1961: 1100.
- ¹³ "Thunder on the Far Right," *Newsweek*, December 4, 1961: 18-19.
- ¹⁴ *The Congressional Record*, Volume 107: A4043.
- ¹⁵ *The New York Times*, June 18, 1961: 1.
- ¹⁶ "Thunder on the Far Right": 20.
- ¹⁷ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier, General of the Army, President-Elect, 1890-1952*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983: 67.
- ¹⁸ "Thunder on the Far Right": 20.
- ¹⁹ "On the shelf," *Time*, April 28, 1961: 16.
- ²⁰ Edwin Walker, *Censorship and Survival*, New York: The Bookmailer, Inc, 1961: 12. This text is an edited version of a written statement delivered by Walker to the Senate Armed Services Committee.
- ²¹ Twenty years after the war's conclusion, at its annual meeting in Cleveland, the First Special Service Force Association remembered Walker's service by citing "an abiding affection, deep respect, and continuing admiration for our comrade at arms, Edwin A. Walker." *The Congressional Record*, Volume 107: Part 13, 6957.
- ²² *The New York Times*, September 25, 1961: 18.
- ²³ Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1992*, New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1993: 57.
- ²⁴ *The New York Times*, September 25, 1961: 18.
- ²⁵ William Link and Arthur Link, *American Epoch: A History of the United States Since 1900, Volume II: Affluence and Anxiety, 1940-1992*, New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1993: 493.
- ²⁶ Walker: 12-13.
- ²⁷ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President*, New York: Simon Schuster, 1983: 231-245.
- ²⁸ Walker: 13.
- ²⁹ Walker: 7.
- ³⁰ *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 4.
- ³¹ Fred J. Cook, "Face of the Radical Right," *The Nation*, October 28, 1961: 322.
- ³² *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 4.
- ³³ *The New York Times*, June 18, 1961: 56.
- ³⁴ *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 6.
- ³⁵ Ambrose, *Eisenhower: The President*: 411-422.
- ³⁶ Walker: 21.
- ³⁷ *The New York Times*, September 26, 1957: 12.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*
- ³⁹ Walker: 22.
- ⁴⁰ "Thunder on the Far Right": 21.
- ⁴¹ *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 12.
- ⁴² *The New York Times*, April 23, 1961: 1.
- ⁴³ Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978: 249-265.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*: 249.
- ⁴⁵ *s Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 13.
- ⁴⁶ *The Congressional Record*, Volume 107: Part 15, 20677.
- ⁴⁷ *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 13.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 13-14.
- ⁴⁹ John Lindsay, "The Case of Gen. Walker," *The Nation*, October 14, 1961: 247. Walker impressed his visitor. Bundy wrote to the *Chicago Tribune*. "My personal observation of Walker's command is that it is one of the most efficient and has the highest morale of any military command in my experience." *The Chicago Tribune*, April 19, 1961: 13.
- ⁵⁰ *The Congressional Record*, Volume 107: Part 6, 8036.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*: Part 7, 8850.
- ⁵² Kent Courtney and Phoebe Courtney, *The Case of General Edwin A. Walker*, New Orleans: The Conservative Society of America, 1961: 101-115. Produced by an ultra-conservative group, the Courtney's book shows a deep bias in favor of Walker, yet it can be a valuable source in the sense that it faithfully reproduces most of the Pro-Blue material.
- ⁵³ *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 11.
- ⁵⁴ *The New York Times*, September 21, 1960: 20.
- ⁵⁵ *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 47.
- ⁵⁶ *The New York Times*, September 21, 1961: 20.
- ⁵⁷ Courtney and Courtney: 20.
- ⁵⁸ *The New York Times*, September 21, 1961: 20.
- ⁵⁹ *The Congressional Record*, Volume 107: Part 7, 8850.
- ⁶⁰ *The New York Times*, April 14, 1961: 1.
- ⁶¹ *The New York Times*, April 15, 1961: 22.
- ⁶² *The New York Times*, April 17, 1961: 15.
- ⁶³ Courtney and Courtney: 56-57.
- ⁶⁴ *The New York Times*, April 22, 1961: 8. In mentioning Truman and Eleanor Roosevelt, JFK most likely had his mind on the reports of Walker's PTA speech. The reference to Eisenhower probably was elicited by a notorious comment made by Robert Welch, the Birch Society founder. In one tract, Welch made the outrageous claim that Ike was "a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy."
- ⁶⁵ LaFeber: 216.
- ⁶⁶ Lipset and Raab: 314.
- ⁶⁷ *The New York Times*, June 18, 1961, 56.
- ⁶⁸ Cook: 322.
- ⁶⁹ *The New York Times*, June 18, 1961: 56.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁷¹ *The New York Times*, September 21, 1961: 20. The wording of the initial press release announcing Walker's transfer, written in Washington under the direction of Arthur Sylvester, was so uncomplimentary that a senior commander in Europe refused to publish it unless revisions were made.
- ⁷² *The New York Times*, April 23, 1961: 65.
- ⁷³ *The New York Times*, September 8, 1961: 13.
- ⁷⁴ *The New York Times*, October 4, 1962: 30.
- ⁷⁵ *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services*: 14.
- ⁷⁶ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1961: 15.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: 1.

⁷⁸ *The New York Times*, April 15, 1961: 22.

⁷⁹ *The New York Times*, June 13, 1961: 34.

⁸⁰ "Civil Rule Still Stands." *The Christian Century*, September 20, 1961: 1009-10.

⁸¹ Walker: 23-24.

⁸² *The New York Times*, October 3, 1962: 1.

⁸³ Gary Cartwright, "The Old Soldier," *Texas Monthly*, February, 1991: 50.



THE MYTH OF THE SPAT-UPON VIETNAM VETERAN AND THE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOLDIERS AS MEANS AND ENDS IN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR

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INTRODUCTION

The ultimate significance of the "Sixties generation experience" will be how that experience plays out in the life of future generations. During the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991, we witnessed the invocation of Vietnam-era imagery—specifically the image of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran—to frame thinking about the Gulf war. That imagery shifted our focus from the real issue of what the United States was doing in the Gulf region to the issue of who did, or did not, support the troops who had been sent to the Gulf. By the time the U.S. went to war on 16 January, the U.S. soldiers in the Gulf had become the reason for the war. How did it come to pass that the means of war, the soldiers themselves, became, in the popular mind, the ends of the war?

Soon after Iraq's August 1 1990 invasion of Kuwait, the Bush Administration began spinning events in ways intended to justify its use of military force. In the fuller version of this story¹ I reconstruct the history of the fall months of 1990, showing how the Bush Administration put forth one reason and then another for why the U.S. should intervene militarily in the Gulf. Those reasons constituted the *ends* that would, or would not, justify the extraordinary *means* of war.

I contend that the Bush Administration put forth each of its six reasons for war in a way that constituted a story, or narrative, in which Americans could understand their own relationship to the war. These narratives framed the event(s) for people, providing context(s) within which to interpret and make sense of the unprecedented acts being undertaken by their government.² I argue that, in the end, by putting forth one reason after another, one story after another, the Bush Administration created a pastiche of rationales that rendered absurd the means and end decision-making calculus, thus forcing the body politic to make the decision to go to war on purely emotional and symbolic ground. The constituent elements of that ground were the image of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran—used as a "perfecting myth" to give the American people a non-rational framing for the war—and yellow ribbons—traditional symbols for prisoners and hostages, turned into a symbol of support for soldiers in the Gulf.³

REASON ONE: DEFENSE OF SAUDI ARABIA

"Iraqis Mass on Saudi Frontier" read the four-column headline in the August 4 *New York Times*. The lead story

reporting that George Bush had "stressed Saudi Arabia" at his news briefing the previous day was accompanied by an analytical piece, "Battle for the Saudi Soul," written by Thomas Friedman. Citing a Washington-based Middle East think tank, Friedman wrote that "the crisis in the Persian Gulf appears to be turning into a struggle between the United States and Iraq for influence over Saudi Arabia and its vast oil reserves." (Apple, 1990a; Friedman, 1990a)

The foregrounding of Saudi Arabia by U.S. policy makers contained important irony and subtext. The irony was that the Saudis had to be convinced that they needed and wanted to be defended. On August 6, U.S. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney arrived in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, to "persuade the cautious Saudis to open their naval bases and airport installations to the Americans." The subtext of this benefactor-to-a-defenseless-friend framing was that U.S. actions were being taken for defensive reasons. This framing neutralized liberal and left-wing opposition for several weeks and virtually insured that debate over increased military involvement would take place within a discourse of "defense." ("Excerpts from Bush's Statement," 1990; Editorial, 1990a)

Beginning August 10, the defense of Saudi Arabia all but disappeared from the news. The *Times* casually reported that "Iraqi forces in Kuwait have adopted a defensive posture, easing fears that President Saddam Hussein would strike swiftly [against Saudi Arabia]." The real truth was that there had never been a threat to Saudi Arabia. The story that Iraq had amassed troops for an immanent attack on the Saudis was not true. As former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark put it in his book *The Fire This Time*, "the U.S. Government [had] lied to justify placing 540,000 troops in Saudi Arabia to attack Iraq." News stories revealing the truth on this issue began surfacing in late 1990 but the mainstream news media ignored them. (Apple, 1990b; Clark, 1992)

REASON TWO: MILITARY TEETH FOR THE ECONOMIC BLOCKADE

In response to the airlift of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia, Iraq announced the annexation of Kuwait on August 8. On August 9, the U.S. dispatched "an armada of more than 50 major ships" to the Persian Gulf. The stated intention of the U.S. move was to support the U.N.'s economic sanctions imposed on Iraq on August 6. The subtext of the naval blockade, however, created a non-military rationale—the enforcement of economic and diplomatic tactics—for U.S. military forces in the Gulf. It also began the process of creating the fig leaf of "internationalism" which the Bush administration would walk behind throughout the war period. (Kifner, 1990a)

During mid-August the news headlined debates and developments relating to the economic blockade, with news of Saudi Arabia's defense hard to find on some days. The military-teeth-in-the-blockade rationale effectively reframed the issue to one of military means being used for non-military objectives, a maneuver that kept opposition frozen for most of the month.

REASON THREE: FREEDOM OF THE HOSTAGES

The keystone of the Bush administration strategy to muster domestic support for the Gulf war was the creation of a hostage issue. The hostage issue was also a transitional issue that allowed the Bush administration to begin recasting the crisis from this-is-about-"them"—the defense of Saudi Arabia and the liberation of Kuwait—to this-is-about-us. In that sense, it was a prelude to fuller discussions of what U.S. "vital interests" were at stake in the region. Given the history of U.S. hostages in the Middle East and the vague associations that many Americans made between hostages and Arab terrorists, it was easy to create a public perception that hostages were the vital interest that justified a military response.

Finally, by writing the role of hostage into the script, any Americans who were in the Gulf region, including military personnel, could be cast in the role and used as a reason for U.S. military intervention. The hostage issue, in other words, paved the way for means and ends to be conflated and, ultimately, for the troops in the Gulf to be both the reasons for the war and the means of war.

The hostage issue had been building since August 4 when the state department reported that fourteen American oil workers were missing in Kuwait and believed to be in Iraqi hands. On August 6, Iraq was reported to be threatening to take hostages and the next day the *New York Times* reported that hundreds of Westerners, including U.S. citizens, were "rounded up" from Kuwait hotels by Iraqi soldiers. For the next two weeks there was an unbroken string of hostage stories about Americans confined to hotels in Baghdad, the Bush administration's fears that Saddam Hussein may be holding American hostages, and the saga of the U.S. children who were stranded in Kuwait when their British Airways flight was unexpectedly grounded by the crisis. Sprinkled in with the stories about the taking and holding of "hostages" were stories of "hostage" releases. Regardless of their content, the hostage stories were successful in constructing a third framework within which U.S. intervention could be understood—the hostage crisis. The hostage crisis was one more card in the growing deck of reasons that the Bush administration could put into play as needed.

And Bush played the hostage card deftly. So deft was he, that he played it by *not* playing it. He simply held the card, let everyone see it, and let the work of newscasters, right-wing social movements and public imagination do the rest. "Doing the rest" meant commingling the hostage story with troops-in-the-Gulf stories during the months of September and October.

The commingling began with George Bush's choice for an occasion to declare the beginning of the "hostage crisis"—the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) convention on August 21. ("Excerpts From President's Remarks," 1990) Other than making the declaration and saying that he would hold the Iraqis responsible for the safety of Americans held against their will, Bush was noncommittal with regard to hostages. His speech moved smoothly from hostages to troops, to whom he also pledged his

support. Then, in a manner that had come to characterize news media profiling of individuals and families trapped in Iraq, Bush read the family profiles of U.S. soldiers already in the Gulf. It was very personal and emotionally moving, but was this a speech about civilian hostages or military troops?

On the surface, of course, it was a speech about hostages, and a very important speech at that. It made official a third reason for the U.S. military build-up in the Persian Gulf and it gave the press all the license it needed to spin hostage stories. But the message was in the medium and the medium was the venue: by declaring the hostage crisis at the VFW convention and commingling the national anxieties about hostages and soldiers, the association between soldiers, veterans, and hostages had been made.

News stories about the welfare of hostages began to alternate with stories about the welfare of troops in a pattern that, at times, was quite striking. What emerged from the commingling of hostage and soldier themes was a generic Americans-endangered-by-Iraq's-aggression motif. George Bush could play his hostage card on the issue of civilian hostages, *per se*, or he could play it on the issue of soldiers-as-hostages. The American people could now be asked to go to war to free civilian hostages or to free the troops in harm's way.

The ultimate commingling of hostage and troop-support symbolism was the use of yellow ribbons—the quintessential hostage symbol—for a support-the-troops symbol. The yellow ribbon had been popularized in the United States in 1973 through the song titled “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree,” which was a ballad about a prisoner coming home. In 1980 yellow ribbons were used as a symbol of support for American hostages in Iran. Never, before the Gulf war, had yellow ribbons been used as symbols of support for soldiers, much less as symbols of support for war.

The popular perception is that the use of yellow ribbons during the Gulf war “began as reminders of the hostages held in Iraq, then turned into reminders to bring the troops home, and then into symbols of support for the war.” (“Welcome Home,” 1991) However popular that perception, neither the sequence nor the consensual, evolutionary logic implicit in it is quite accurate. In fact, the first uses of the yellow ribbon came near military bases and they were explicitly identified with troops, not with civilian hostages. (DeParle, 1990; Belkin, 1990a) The yellow ribbon campaign wasn't spontaneous and it wasn't just organized—it was an organization. “Operation Yellow Ribbon” was founded in the fall of 1990 by Gaye Jacobson, a manager for a Silicon Valley, California defense contractor who had a son in the Gulf. Later incorporated in the state of California, Operation Yellow Ribbon claimed 27 chapters with 5,000 members in six states. Jacobson initially volunteered her time to the organization but her Board of Directors eventually voted her a \$4,000 a month salary.⁴ (“Gaye Jacobson,” 1991)

If few Americans needed a forest of yellow ribbon to evoke their sympathies for displaced soldiers and their families, neither was it a given that they would transfer their emotions from support for individuals to support for

policy. Indeed, in the context of the time, it appeared that the logical link between those two levels of emotional commitment would have to be made for the public. Mere symbolism would not do. Someone would have to *say* that the two were linked—or say that they were *not* linked. Either would do as a means to create a storm of controversy over support for troops vs. support for the war. The Democratic National Committee took the latter tack.

On September 16 the DNC “expressed full support for the American troops in the Persian Gulf while criticizing the Republican Administration that put them there.” (Toner, 1990) This support-the-troops-but-not-the-policy statement did two things: First, it signaled to the public that there was a debatable issue here. In fact, with its statement, the DNC created *the* issue that would soon supersede all other issues such as why the U.S. was intervening militarily in the first place; secondly, it evaded the important question of how one could oppose the policy without opposing the troops. Therein was the rub. On the surface the statement legitimized opposition to a U.S. military role. But it did so in the context of hysteria over hostages and troops-as-hostages that was several weeks in the making and which already had a grip on the emotions of the American people. Could opponents of the policy voice their opposition without appearing to be attacking the troops? Not likely. Was it likely that the yellow ribbon campaigners would translate their support for the troops into opposition to the war and demand that the troops be brought home? No way. In reality, the DNC had constructed a one-sided discourse that mobilized the pro-war sentiments of the American people.

REASON FOUR: THE (MILITARY) LIBERATION OF KUWAIT

This was a different rationale than the use of the military for teeth in the economic blockade of Iraq. It took over the headlines in mid-September and extended the hostage narrative to include the Kuwaitis.

In retrospect, the absence of Kuwait from the headlines between the very early days in August, when the crisis began, until mid-September is rather conspicuous. After all, wasn't the whole crisis about forcing Iraq out of Kuwait? Perhaps. But for reasons we can only speculate about,⁵ the Bush administration really never played the liberation-of-Kuwait card heavily and then it did so only as a variation on the hostage theme. By weaving Kuwait into its hostage narrative, the Administration was able to use Kuwait to establish a humanitarian rationale, as opposed to political or economic, for the use of military force against Iraq. By casting Kuwait in the role of hostage-in-need-of-liberation, the U.S. was able to blur the distinction between its own military role as one that was defensive and political to one that was overtly offensive.

On September 15 the *Times* reported that “fears of immediate Iraqi attack [on Saudi Arabia] have dissipated, and the question has shifted from how well United States and its allies would defend the Saudi kingdom to how well

they might exercise 'offensive option' to push Iraqis out of Kuwait." (Gordon, 1990c)

Over the next several days there appeared a series of Kuwait-related hostage stories. We know now that many of those stories, including the widely reported story about Iraqi soldiers dumping 312 Kuwaiti babies out of hospital incubators, were concocted by a Washington public relations firm, Hill and Knowlton, that was headed by Craig Fuller, a former chief of staff for then-Vice President Bush. (MacArthur, 1992; Kellner, 1992).

For five straight days, from September 25 to September 30, the liberation of Kuwait was the headline story of the Gulf crisis and then it faded, like the others, to be periodically returned to prominence as events and administrative needs dictated.

REASON FIVE: HUSSEIN THE 'HITLER'

The demonization of Saddam Hussein was a logical extension of the hostage issue: if there were hostages to be liberated, they would have to be liberated from someone or something. The hostage narrative required a hostage-taker/holder.

The propaganda campaign to make Saddam Hussein into a demon will be a textbook case, studied for decades. The press began to lay the groundwork for demonizing Hussein in early August by running personal profiles on him. The first profile, which ran on August 3, contrasted Hussein with the Emir of Kuwait. Hussein was described as a "socialist" and "head of a ruling clique" who had come to power through a "coup." The profile alleged that he had been part of assassination attempts against political opponents and had "had about 30 leading Baath party members [his own party] killed, including one of his closest companions in the struggle for power." The Emir's profile, on the other hand, read: "heads a family that has ruled Kuwait for 234 years... was named Minister of Finance and Economy [in 1961]... ran the country in the old-fashioned way, with a benevolent paternalism."

Expediting the process, the U.S. propaganda machine constructed the one comparison that no one would mistake: Hussein was like Hitler. The lead-in to the Hitler comparison was a set of stories running over several days about Hussein's use of gas against his opponents in Iraq and the concern that he might use poisonous gas against U.S. troops. Hitler. Gas. Get it? The gas stories came in all forms: a learned-sounding "military analysis" piece describing poison gas as the "poor man's A-Bomb;" a report that nerve gas "antidotes" for U.S. troops were being rushed to the Gulf; the arrest of seven people (Germans, of course) for supplying Iraq with the components to make gas; an open letter to George Bush asking why the President had not stood up to Hussein for gassing his own people; a story on Israelis being advised to seal their windows in preparation for a gas attack, etc. (Browne, 1990; Protzman, 1990; Brinkley, 1990; Molnar, 1990) No one should have been surprised when the Hitler analog fed, downstream, into the defense of Israel for additional rationale for war against Saddam Hussein.

The Hitlerizing of Hussein helped the U.S. government recast the conflict in the Gulf Region as one with global dimensions. Hitler was, after all, out to conquer the world. By analogy, Hussein was portrayed as interested in far more than Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. As George Bush would eventually express it: this isn't about the United States against Saddam Hussein, this is Saddam Hussein against the World. It followed, of course, that with the U.S. the only remaining superpower that could possibly stop Hussein, this pending war was not just about defending or liberating "them" (Saudi Arabia and Kuwait), this was about "us."

The Hitlerizing of Hussein came during an otherwise slow month for news about the Gulf conflict.⁶ When the tempo picked up, the Hussein-Hitler-Hostage theme was in the headlines. There were letters from hostages (distributed to the press by the aforementioned Hill and Knowlton company) on October 30 and front page reports from repatriated French hostages about the conditions of U.S. and British hostages on October 31. The *Times* headline on November 1 read: "Bush intensifies a War of Words Against the Iraqis." One week later, and two days after voters had bashed Bush's Republican Party, the President ordered more than 150,000 additional troops to the Gulf. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney said the additional troops gave the U.S. the capability to "conduct offensive military operations." (Dowd, 1990a; Gordon, 1990d) It was becoming increasingly apparent that the United States was going after Saddam Hussein. When George Bush denied on December 8 that the absence of hostages or an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait jeopardized his plans for war, any notion that the looming conflict was about Iraq's aggression should have been dispelled. (Dowd, 1990b)

REASON SIX: Jobs

On November 14, Secretary of State James Baker said "a primary reason the United States must confront Iraq is to save American jobs." "Jobs" was the answer to the question, "What vital interests?" that had dogged the Administration since August 8 when George Bush had said that defense of Saudi Arabia was of "vital interest" to the United States. Jobs was the blue collar side of the "oil" reason, but Baker's attempt to equate oil with jobs and thereby sell a war for the oil companies as something that was in workers' interest did not work. The "oil crisis" that some expected to result from the Iraq-Kuwait dispute never materialized and, on the eve of the first bombing, the *New York Times* editorially shot down the oil-as-a-vital-interest reason for war. (Friedman, 1990c; Editorial, 1991) Vital interest got spun in other ways as well⁷ but the fact remained that the American people were not buying *any* reason for military intervention.⁸

REASON ABANDONED: TOWARD WAR WITH IRAQ

On the surface, the Administration's resort to "jobs" and "Iraqi nukes" as reasons for military intervention appeared to be acts of desperation. The administration had, after all, frantically constructed on reason after another

for its build-up toward military action in the Gulf. Yet, none of those reasons had convinced the American people that war was necessary. The Administration had failed.

Or had it? In the end, the putting forth of one reason after another functioned to paralyze rational discourse. Could anyone make sense of what this looming conflict was all about? No. And that was the point. The Administration succeeded in making it impossible to reason about the rightness and wrongness of this war. With reason neutralized, opinion about the war defaulted to the levels of emotion, symbolism and myth. It was the myth of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran that galvanized the sentiments of the American people sufficiently to discredit peace activists and give George Bush his war.

Opposition to the War

During August and September there were only scattered reports of active opposition to military intervention.⁹ By early October, however, mainstream religious groups were voicing their disagreement with the direction of the Administration's policy. (Steinfelds, 1990) The presence of religious opposition was important because it provided a moral sanction for those who were protesting the military build-up in the Gulf. The form taken by that opposition was also important because it exposed the shallowness of the arguments put forth by the Bush Administration. Religion-based opposition was given form by the Catholic Church's teaching on "just-war." Just-war theory "begins with a presumption against the use of force and then admits the possibility of justifiable exceptions to the presumption." (Hehir, 1991: 125-26). To be justifiable three questions have to be satisfied: why? when? how? The "why?" question referred to the basic reason for the conflict. For example, was the defense of Saudi Arabia a good enough basic reason for the commitment of military troops? The theologian's answer to "when?" was "only as a last resort, after all political and diplomatic options had been exhausted." The "how?" question encompassed questions about what means were justifiable, could a distinction be made between military and civilian targets, and how much force was enough?

Just-war theorists involved the public in a carefully reasoned debate about whether the means of war were justified in this case. The problem for the Administration was that its policy did not stand the test. While some church leaders found "just cause" in the need to expel Iraq from Kuwait, few were satisfied that war was the last remaining resort.¹⁰ Reporting on public sentiment about the military build-up on Veterans Day, normally a time when people rally around the flag, country, and Presidents, the *Times* reported, "Americans are talking openly about the President's inability to 'sell' war to a wary populace."

After the November 8 announcement of increased troop deployment, opposition grew and by early December reports of organizing by students and antiwar groups began to mount.¹¹ (Foderaro, 1990) The most troublesome voices, however, from the Administration's point of view, were coming from within the military. Within a week

after the announcement, reports began to trickle out about soldiers resisting being sent to the Gulf. During the next few weeks, a large number of active duty and National Guard soldiers sought conscientious objector status. And not all of the in-service dissent was stateside. When Secretary of State James Baker and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell visited the troops in the Gulf in November they faced discontent bordering on hostility. Later, when President Bush made his Thanksgiving tour of the troops, special security was provided for him and soldiers "were carefully selected and briefed on how to conduct themselves with him." The appearance that the Commander-in-Chief had to be protected from his own troops was very embarrassing for the Administration.¹²

Then, on December 6, Saddam Hussein delivered what could have been a lethal blow to George Bush's domestic propaganda campaign. Announcing that all westerners were free to leave Iraq and Kuwait, Hussein took away the most emotionally potent reason for U.S. military intervention: Reason Three, the hostages. The announcement came just at the time, three weeks before Christmas, when the Administration could have used real hostages to exploit the separation anxieties of the nation. But recall that George Bush had played the hostage card very carefully. While wary Americans were keeping an eye on George Bush to see that he did not *over* commit, in Carter fashion, on the hostage issue, Bush did the opposite: he had left himself *uncommitted* on the hostage issue so that if the issue dissolved, his plans for war did not dissolve with it.

But the sudden move by Saddam Hussein gave the Administration problems, nevertheless. For one thing, the Administration's right to intervene militarily to save innocent Americans without Congressional approval had been assumed all along. Now, with no civilian American in either Kuwait or Iraq (except those who were clearly there by their own choice), Bush was on a shorter leash. For another thing, "hostages" had been a large fig leaf hiding the offensive posture of the Administration and which, symbolically provided a sure bet for rallying pro-war public opinion when necessary. With its position uncovered, the Administration now had to either abandon its aggressive stance or confront, more candidly, the growing opposition.

As we know, George Bush stayed the course to war and successfully transferred much of the sentiment that had been mobilized around hostages to soldiers. In effect, soldiers became the new hostages that needed to be rescued—by other soldiers of course. Soldiers became the ends and means of George Bush's war.¹³

AGAINST THE "COALITION AGAINST THE U.S."

On November 15 the National Council of Churches unanimously approved a "stinging rebuke of Bush Administration's policy in the Persian Gulf and called for immediate withdrawal of most United States troops." (Goldman, 1990) On December 10 the *New York Times*, which had muted the voices of dissent for the first four months of the fall, ran a photo of a protest march against

the Administration's war-like actions in the Gulf.¹⁴ And, as already mentioned, voices of dissent from within the service began to be heard just before Thanksgiving. The specter of an antiwar movement that combined the moral authority of mainstream churches with the credibility of dissenting soldiers was ominous, in the Administration's eyes. This new enemy, dubbed the "Coalition Against the U.S." in the *National Review*, would have to be engaged. (Horowitz, 1991)

As the Senate Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees opened hearings on the policy, Bush began to complain that critics threatened the success of what was then still called "Operation Desert Shield." (Lewis, 1990) Bush's strategy was to turn the tables on his opponents by using their antiwar position against them. Implicit in this strategy, previously employed by the Nixon Administration in the closing years of the Vietnam war, was the assumption that peace could best be achieved through strength: those who were against the war in Vietnam were undermining the strength of America and, thus, prolonging the war. Applied to the Gulf war, the reasoning went that those who were opposed to the Administration's policies were, objectively speaking, pro-war and, by extension, would have to be held accountable for the deaths of American soldiers in the Gulf.

A conservative group calling itself the Coalition for America at Risk began running a series of paid television commercials and newspaper ads that made the soldiers themselves the reason for the war. (Tolchin, 1990) The full-page ads in major papers such as the *New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* featured a large photo of barren ground with a curvy line running across it. Beneath the photo, in mid-sized type justified to the left margin, was the caption: "It's not just a 'line in the sand' ... it's ..." Then, in large block type beneath the caption and centered on the page, was the single word: "PEOPLE." The bottom half of the page addressed itself to "all the men and women participating in Operation Desert Shield," with the words "we are behind you and support you 100%!" Reading down, the ad passed along a "special hello from home" to sixty-three nicknamed soldiers in a unit identified as HMLA-367: Slick, Max, Rooster, Elvis, Bilbo, Badfinger, Fuzzy, The Dakota Kid, etc.¹⁵

In no sense, however, was this ad a greetings message to the troops in the Gulf. The audience for this ad was not the troops at all, but the American people. The construction of the ad asked us to make a distinction between material and human reasons for war. It gave us, the readers, permission to choose. But the choice was about more than what the war was about. The choice was about *how* to make choices about support or non-support for the war. To choose the "line in the sand" as a reason for what "it's" about was to choose a materialist framework within which logical propositions about the ends and means related to the defense of national boundaries could be debated and adjudicated. It was in effect a choice to make one's decision within the mode of discourse chosen, up to that point, by both the Bush Administration and the antiwar theologians. To choose

"people," on the other hand, was to choose to make decisions about the war on different, largely emotional, grounds—to be sure, a welcomed alternative, given the Bush Administration's four-month abuse of ends-means reasoning over material objectives. But which people should this war be about? Who are the people in this ad? Not Kuwaitis. Not Saudis. This war is about Fuzzy and Bilbo, the boys from down the block. The war is about the soldiers who have been sent to fight the war.

In other words, the ad conflated the objectives of war with those who had been sent to fight the war. By thus dissolving the distinction between ends and means, the very framework within which people could reason about the war was destroyed. In place of a discourse of reason, the ad gives us a discourse of emotion and identity: we should not *think* about what this war is about, we should *feel*. Henceforth, the campaign for war was framed by symbols, emotion, and myth.

What we should feel was mediated by the symbols mobilized for the occasion. Most visible, of course, was the yellow ribbon, discussed previously as a symbol of support for the war. During December the yellow ribbon also became a symbol of opposition to the antiwar movement. To do that, the yellow ribbon campaign effectively dovetailed its agenda with two issues from the Vietnam era that the American people felt very emotional about: the POW/MIA issue and the issue of spat-upon Vietnam veterans. The POW/MIA issue was a natural. As the premier soldier-as-hostage theme, it was a perfect fit with one subtext that the Bush Administration had constructed throughout the fall. As something that had really happened (there really had been POWs and MIAs during the Vietnam war), the POW/MIA issue provided grounding for the concern about the welfare of U.S. troops and amplified the national anxiety about the costs of war. But as a tool for mobilizing opposition to the antiwar movement, the purely symbolic, mythological side of the POW/MIA issue was even more valuable. That side, which H. Bruce Franklin exposes in his book *MIA: Mythmaking in America*, was more valuable to the yellow ribbon campaign because it mobilized not just sentiments *for* the soldiers, but also the anger and paranoia surrounding the abandonment of the alleged prisoners of war being held by the Vietnamese. These hostile sentiments were directed *against* any individuals and groups who were perceived to have turned their backs on the POWs and MIAs. The original back-turners were those who were opposed, during the early 1970s, to continuing the war in Vietnam until all prisoners were liberated or released. (Franklin, 1992)¹⁶

THE IMAGE OF THE SPAT-UPON VIETNAM VETERAN

The image of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran figured even more prominently in the rhetoric of those supporting the Gulf war. In that image, soldiers were the scapegoats against whom those who opposed the war directed their hostility. Allegedly, members of the antiwar movement spat upon soldiers just returned from Vietnam and the

acts of spitting were said to be accompanied by cries of "Babykiller!" and "Murderer!"

That image had been cultivated mostly by movies such as the Rambo series during the 1980s. Those movies were very popular so the issue of how Vietnam veterans had been treated was undoubtedly a concern shared by many Americans in 1990. But the link between that Vietnam-era issue and support for the Gulf war was not spontaneously made by masses of people. In fact, the link was first made by Senate and House members, Vietnam veterans, who were interviewed for a story in the *New York Times* on September 16. The story was accompanied by paired photos: Senator John Kerry sitting in his office paired with a photo of the boat he commanded in Vietnam; Senator John McCain in his office with a photo of him hospitalized in North Vietnam as a POW.

The story itself framed the linkage between the Vietnam war and the Gulf war in such a way that treatment of soldiers and veterans became the issue. Representative John Murtha, for example, who had served as a Marine in Vietnam, said that on a recent visit to the Gulf "troops repeatedly asked whether 'the folks back home' supported them. 'The aura of Vietnam hangs over these kids,' the Pennsylvania Democrat said. 'Their parents were in it. They've seen all these movies. They worry, they wonder.'" (Apple, 1990e).

The "aura of Vietnam." It was not the loss of the war, not the massive destruction of Vietnam, not the death of 58,000 Americans and 1,900,000 Vietnamese or any of the other myriad things that that war was more evidently about. The aura of Vietnam—what the war in Vietnam was about, as framed by John Murtha in this story, was the level of support that soldiers and veterans received from the American people. To make sure that nobody missed the point, the *Times* tied the package—Vietnam veterans, the Gulf war, and hostility for the antiwar movement—with reports from the Gulf like the following:

One soldier asked that his name not be used and also asked that an officer step away to permit the soldier to speak freely to a reporter.... "When we deployed here, people cheered and waved flags," he [said], "but if I go back home like the Vietnam vets did and somebody spits on me, I swear to God I'll kill them." (LeMoyné, 1990b)

These sentiments, brought to the surface during the middle weeks of the Gulf war build-up, were then played upon by Operation Yellow Ribbon in December. Operation Yellow Ribbon carried out its campaign through state and local organizations like "Operation Eagle," headquartered in the Boston suburb of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts.¹⁷

Claiming the support of the U.S. Army, Marine, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard Reserve Units, Operation Eagle functioned on three levels. One level involved the collection of material items that Operation Eagle leaders claimed were needed by soldiers in the Gulf. Using the stationery of the Third Marine Division Association, Operation Eagle solicited donations of reading material, board games, videos, sports equipment and personal items such as lip balm and sunglasses. The

solicitation listed a "hotline" number for further information but did not say that the number belonged to the Department of Defense, Defense Logistics Agency.¹⁸ Operation Eagle's collection campaign stimulated a host of other organizing activities. Banks set up special accounts (and phone numbers) to handle donations; businesses made donations and used the occasions for press conferences that brought public visibility to themselves and lent the credibility of their symbolically important institutions to Operations Eagle and Yellow Ribbon and the military intervention in the Gulf region. The uniformed soldiers who were made available through Operation Eagle, and the piles of material collected, created made-for-media photo opportunities.

A second level at which Operation Eagle/Yellow Ribbon functioned involved a propaganda campaign carried out in the public schools. The program had Operation Eagle leaders and military personnel going into the schools and getting students involved in writing letters to soldiers in the Gulf. Students who wrote letters were given red, white, and blue "Operation Eagle" hats. The students also drew pictures of military equipment and soldiers and participated in special social studies classes on the Gulf conflict. The following newspaper account from the Worcester, Massachusetts *Telegram and Gazette* captured the character of the campaign:

South Royalston [Mass.] Paul F. Roughan, a retired Marine and one of the founders of Operation Eagle, visited the Whitney School Friday with three Marine gunnery sergeants from the 25th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, capping a two-week exercise in current events for students.

Visibly moved by the singing of the Marine Hymn and a plaque from Principal Alan Genovese, signed by all students on behalf of [sic] Operation Eagle, Roughan told the students that by their acts of kindness and friendship they had written themselves into history.

In addition to the plaque and the letters, the Marines were presented 46 patriotic posters to be judged in a contest, more than 100 red, white, and blue wrist sweatbands and almost 150 paperbacks for troops in the desert. (Miner, 1990)

The account was accompanied by a photo of South Royalston students wearing the stylish Operation Eagle baseball caps.

The school campaign gave Operation Eagle enormous visibility and, through the thousands of children directly touched by military personnel who went into the schools, indirect access to the hearts and minds of thousands more adults. By the time the bombing began schools were plastered with yellow bows and kids were draped in yellow-ribbon fashions.¹⁹ Most importantly, however, the political fallout from Operation Eagle's appearances in the school created a pretext for attacks on the antiwar movement.

In the context of the times, Operation Eagle's foray into the schools was an act of provocation. The pro-war, propagandistic character of what it was doing was self-evident. And when parents and interested civilians ob-

jected, Operation Eagle, with the help of the press and grassroots conservatives, construed their objections to be anti-soldier. Following the cues provided by the Bush Administration's linkage of antiwar, anti-soldier themes, Operation Eagle engaged the enemy.

Operation Eagle's war against the antiwar movement was the third, and most important, level at which it would operate. When a Worcester, Massachusetts mother objected to the presence of Operation Eagle in her son's school, the local press, following the script of the Bush Administration, turned on her. Writing in their lead editorial on Sunday December 9, the editors of the local paper wrote:

Not even the most dedicated antiwar activists should focus their opposition on American servicemen and women. Yet that's what some did during a recent demonstration in front of Worcester City Hall.

One of the speakers, Claire Schaeffer-Duffy, criticized Operation Eagle, a program that encouraged school children to send Christmas cards and letters to soldiers in Saudi Arabia.

"I believe it's really an effort to enhance military morale before a carnage and an effort to placate the American public's disquiet over our military presence there," she said.

What nonsense! (Editorial, 1990b)

Two days later the paper ran a large cartoon showing a soldier with an envelope addressed to "any soldier, desert shield," the generic address that Operation Eagle had been telling school children to use. The soldier was tipping the envelope so that a large amount of what looked like tiny scraps of paper were pouring out of it. The cartoon has him saying, "Some grade school kids from Worcester mailed us... CONFETTI!?" A second soldier is shown saying, "Nope... those are the kids LETTERS... edited by some protest group." The editorial and cartoon signaled open season on the opposition to George Bush's war.

Within days the paper was flooded with letters that parroted the themes of soldiers, hostages, Vietnam, and the antiwar movement that the Bush Administration had so ably commingled during the previous weeks:

On December 6 I had the privilege of attending the Worcester School Committee meeting at City Hall. I saw and heard firsthand the debate on the petition to stop the children of our city schools from writing letters to service members overseas.... While listening to these supporters [of the petition] I had flashbacks of the 1960s. The only difference was during the 1960s they were in their 20s with flowers and beads, today they are in their 40s with gray hair and children.... I pray and hope [Gulf war] veterans will never return to the unfriendly and unsupportive country my generation returned to. (Langevin, 1990)

Because of the complicated nature of the crisis in Kuwait, some people with negative minds have surfaced to preach their half-truths and naive views. Many of these so-called "antiwar activists" unmercifully broke the hearts of thousands of Vietnam veterans with their insane actions. Hopefully, we have become

intelligent enough to prevent these people from tearing the country apart again. (Cote, 1990)

Once again opposition to the war is misdirected. It is being aimed at our sons... and the young soldiers we have send off to Saudi Arabia... You've got to care. These were the last words of a soldier who died in Vietnam... read by his mother at the dedication of the Leominster Vietnam Veterans Memorial this spring.... You've got to care about those who died, about those who came home, about those who are still missing and about the 400,000 we are sending out now. (Menegakis, 1990)

Some of these peace activist groups have been around since the Vietnam War. What I find interesting is that we haven't heard hardly anything of these groups since the end of the Vietnam War.... While the Vietnam veteran has been trying to get the POW/MIAs out of Southeast Asia, trying to take care of those with physical and/or mental wounds of war over the past 25 years, what have they been doing?... Or are these the same people that spit on the GIs when they came home? (Greenlaw, 1990)

Operation Eagle's war on the antiwar movement was waged with more than words. By mid-December, 1990 the war memorial in downtown Worcester, which had for over a month been the site of weekly peace vigils called by antiwar groups, became the site of a confrontation between forces for and against the Bush administration's militarization of the Gulf conflict. Operation Eagle people began showing up at the site early and occupying the sidewalk space. This forced the antiwar people to either contend physically for the space or retreat to ground away from the street, which they did. The confrontational tactics of Operation Eagle continued, however, through verbal harassment and menacing behavior like waving flag poles in the faces of war opponents. (Hamel, 1991)

That Operation Yellow Ribbon carried out a two-pronged mission of supporting the troops while attacking the antiwar movement is abundantly clear from the words of one of its supporters interviewed at a Worcester, Massachusetts protest rally in February. When asked by the interviewer why she was at the rally she said:

The first reason, the first time I came out, the reason was, is because of what happened to the Vietnam vets. I felt that they were treated so badly and they fought for their country and they were treated so bad that I tried to make up for it in this way.

I heard *they* [motions to peace vigil] were going to be here. And I didn't know anybody else was going to be here but I came down to protest the protesters. That's the only reason I came. Was to protest the protesters. I want the boys over there to know that there *are* people over here who are behind them and they're not gonna have to come home ashamed of their uniform; they're not gonna be having to take their uniform off at the airport so they can sneak into their own country and not be called murderers and everything. (Porter, 1991)

Across the country, the role played by Operation Eagle in Massachusetts was played by other affiliates of Operation Yellow Ribbon. One which drew national

attention was in the Chicago suburb of Schaumburg where efforts to block an Operation Yellow Ribbon group from entering Dooley Elementary School drew a response from President Bush. That story, carried in the pages of major newspapers across the country, reinforced the feeling that the real line of conflict in the Gulf war was drawn between those who supported and those who opposed the troops. (Mills, 1991)

By Spring of 1991 the activities of Operation Yellow Ribbon had spawned a small, new industry in war-related fashions, games, T-shirts, hats, coffee mugs and trinkets. Just about anything that could carry the imprint of a yellow ribbon was for sale in airport gift shops and novelty stores. (Castro, 1991)

But the yellow ribbon was only the symbol. The "real" thing was the image of the Vietnam veteran abused by the antiwar movement. The image was invoked countless times during the Gulf war period, sometimes in news accounts intended to be sympathetic to the Gulf-war protesters:

Vietnam-era protests often were directed at the soldiers themselves, revealing an ugly streak of elitism at best; this year's demonstrators see the GIs as victims. "You won't see protesters spitting on soldiers as they come off the plane," predicted Greg Sommers, director of the Fayetteville, NC branch of Quaker House, a pacifist organization. (Adler, 1991)

The not infrequent invocation of the spat-upon veteran image by those who had been active opponents of the Vietnam war, and were now opposed to the Gulf war, may have been opportunism on the part of some, as suggested by David Horowitz.²⁰ (1991) But, given that the press was trying to frame the opposition to the Gulf war with the narrative of antiwar movement hostility to war veterans, it is also possible that Vietnam-era activists were misquoted or had their words taken out of context. More likely, though, the self-incriminating statements of antiwar activists testify to the hegemony that the image of the defiled Vietnam veteran had acquired through the effect of popular culture and the power of the news media to keep the image in the face of the American people during the period of the Gulf war build-up.²¹ (Gross, 1991)

But how real is the image of the spat-upon Vietnam veteran? While there is evidence that conservative veterans organizations like the American Legion were hostile to antiwar Vietnam veterans, there is virtually no evidence that antiwar activists were hostile to veterans. And while it is difficult to prove a negative—in this case, to prove that Vietnam veterans were not spat upon—there is plenty of evidence of real solidarity between Vietnam veterans and the antiwar movement. Indeed, soldiers and veterans were an important part of the Vietnam-era antiwar movement. Between 1965 and 1973, there were an estimated 17,000 applications for conscientious objector status by in-service soldiers. Resistance to military authority and the war was rife in Vietnam. Of the approximately ten million men in the military during the Vietnam war, there were 1.5 million AWOLs and 550,000 deser-

tions. By 1969 there was widespread insubordination. (Gioglio, 1989)

Antiwar activists set up coffeehouses around military bases and offered counseling services to in-service GIs. Near Fort Hamilton, New York, on the Brooklyn end of the Varazzano Bridge, soldiers leaving the fort were regularly leafleted by members of the antiwar movement and offered sanctuary in a nearby church if they chose to leave the service. Soldiers were never attacked or harassed by antiwar people.²² A Neilson poll of GIs returning from Vietnam in 1971 showed that fifty-percent approved of peace demonstrations. (Neilson, 1971)

But in the war of words being waged by the Bush administration in the Fall and Winter of 1990-91, proof mattered for little, if anything, and truth, itself, became what people believed. What mattered is that lots of Americans believed that the image of antiwar protesters spitting on Vietnam veterans was true and allowed it to frame their thinking about the Gulf war.

VIETNAM-WAR SYNDROME: A REAL REASON FOR THE GULF WAR

To say that millions of Americans supported the Gulf war because they thought that to do otherwise would be a disservice to the U.S. soldiers in the Gulf is to say that the Bush Administration had successfully made the means of war—soldiers—also the ends, or reason for the war in the minds of the American people. The soldiers as means and ends became the justification for the war and the symbolic rallying point for patriotism. It is not to say that soldiers really were the reason for the war. Indeed, the real reason(s) for the war are still in dispute.

It would be consistent with the analysis developed in this article, however, to argue that some version of the "Vietnam syndrome" for the war is probably correct. That explanation posits that the Gulf war was necessary as a kind of shock therapy to jolt the American people out of their reluctance for war, a reluctance which, allegedly, was a hangover from the defeat in Vietnam. The Gulf war was to be a demonstration of military prowess that was so awesome that positive identification with it would be irresistible. (Cloud, 1991) Opposition to the war, by the same token, would look so hopeless that the few pathetic souls that dared would be automatically subjected to devastating levels of status deprivation. In turn, through the associations made between antiwar activists, past and present, by Operation Yellow Ribbon and grassroots conservatives, the delegitimation of Gulf war opposition would be easily transferred onto the Vietnam-era antiwar movement. In one stroke, then, the will to war could be resurrected and the ghost of antiwar activism past could be put in the ground for good.

By this reading, the dispatching of troops to the Gulf was an exercise in what is sometimes called "armed propaganda" and the war was really a propaganda war against the American people. Armed propaganda is a way of arguing through action. In this case, rather than going to the American people first and explaining why intervention in the Gulf was necessary, Bush sent the troops and then sought approval. Not getting the approval he wanted

by November, he sent more troops—then asked again. In part it is the audacity of the actor, George Bush in this case, that is intended to be persuasive—who would dare oppose? And who would get hurt if opposition was successful? Why, the troops of course. It was policy by extortion, blackmail.

The technique of armed propaganda had been rehearsed by the Reagan-Bush Administrations with the invasions of Grenada and Panama. Armed propaganda substitutes for reason and rational argument through its appeals to the emotions. It communicates through a discourse of military symbolism, not words and logical propositions. Once the Administration had paralyzed the ends-means discourse,²³ the armed propaganda technique enabled the Bush Administration to default public decision-making on the war to the levels of emotion and symbolism. The image of the spat-upon veteran functioned during the Gulf war as a "perfecting myth" to both explain and justify the world while it simultaneously directed the production of the world. The analysis confirms Virginia Carmichael's claim that perfecting myths "articulate and produce a specific working relationship between individuals and their state and its policies—a relationship that insure[s] individuals' voluntary acquiescence to, support for, and daily investment in a specific history not of their choosing."²⁴

Conclusion

It has been said that we frame our understanding of current wars through memories of our last war. Those memories are heavily mediated by images created by film, music, television, literature, as well as oral and written histories. Thus, and tragically, the United States fought the war in Vietnam through World War II-vintage understandings of war that were "remembered" for us through film. (Doherty 1991: 257-59) And, as I have shown here, the Persian Gulf war was mentally framed, for many Americans, by what they remembered the Vietnam war to have been about.

Most of the analysis done on the Gulf war has focused on the media and the ability of the government to censor the press.²⁵ The analysis made here is more in keeping with that of Neil Postman who points out that control over *how* we know is more important than control over *what* we know. While it is true that the government controlled the content of news during the Gulf war, it is more important that it was able to enormously influence how the American people thought about—or did not think about, as I have argued here—the Gulf war. Its control was more Huxlian than Orwellian, its problematic more epistemological than empirical.

Whether the Vietnam war, because it was America's first lost war, has been more mythologized than previous wars, is a matter for debate. In any case, though, it is significant that the "remembered" Vietnam war is really not the war itself but the homecoming experience of the Vietnam veterans. The emotional energies of thousands of Americans were mobilized during the Gulf war not for the liberation of Kuwait nor even to win back something lost in Vietnam but rather, as the woman at the rally in

Worcester, Massachusetts said, because of what happened to the Vietnam veterans. Since the war in Vietnam is remembered as having been about what happened to Vietnam veterans, the Persian Gulf war was fought for that reason.

Ironically, if it was the real Vietnam war that was remembered, the Persian Gulf war would probably not have been fought. We need to take away the power of political and cultural institutions to mythologize our experiences and we need to dispel the power of myths like the spat-upon Vietnam veteran by debunking them and showing how they are used by political administrations to manipulate the decision-making process.

NOTES

¹ This article is an excerpt from a first chapter of a book-length study of the myth of the spat-upon veteran.

² The best discussion of "framing" is Snow and Benford (1988). See also Kanjirathinkal and Hickey (1992).

³ I am using the term "Bush Administration" in the broad sense, to include not just the President and his cabinet, but to refer to the governmental apparatus, private political consultants and the press establishment that was responsible for the formulation, execution and selling of the Gulf war policy. In presenting the six reasons sequentially, in the order they rose to prominence during the fall months of 1990, I do not mean to imply that they did not overlap with one another temporally and thematically. In real time, during the fall of 1990, they blurred together, sometimes being conjoined in Administrative press statements in packages of two or three. Not always able to distinguish one reason from another, the public was less able than it otherwise might have been to engage political leaders in meaningful debate on the issues surrounding U.S. intervention in the Gulf.

⁴ In April of 1991 Jacobson founded another organization, the American Awareness Foundation.

⁵ Among the reasons that Bush treaded lightly on the Kuwait issue are the following: the history of Kuwait makes Kuwaiti sovereignty a bit suspect; Kuwait is notably undemocratic; the Kuwaiti people are hardly a sympathetic lot.

⁶ There were days, like October 22, when there was no front page story on the Gulf conflict.

⁷ On August 16th, for example, President Bush told Pentagon employees that "our way of life" was at stake in this conflict. (Apple, 1990d) For a critical perspective on "our way of life" as an imperialist ideology, see Michael Parenti (1989).

⁸ In a New York Times/CBS poll reported on November 20, 56% of respondents said restoring the government of Kuwait and defending Saudi Arabia were not good enough reasons to go to war, while only 35% said it was a good enough reason; 62% said the protection of much of the world's oil was not a good enough reason (31% said that was a good reason). With 54% of the respondents saying it was a good enough reason, only stopping Saddam Hussein from developing nuclear weapons had a reputable showing in the poll.

The problem with the "nuke" issue was that it, too, was phony. On November 20, Richard Rhodes, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, wrote an op-ed piece in which he put "Iraqi acquisition of a

limited nuclear arsenal at least 10 years away." (Rhodes, 1990)

⁹ Typically, press accounts downplayed the opposition and attempted to discredit opponents. An analysis of poll results reported on September 8, for example, described opponents of the military build-up as poor, alienated and black. (Malcolm, 1990).

¹⁰ See the statement of Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk, the President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, in Goldman (1990).

While the question of "proportionality," of how much, was a bit hypothetical in the Fall of 1990, it was clear within a few weeks after the bombing began in January 1991 that the U.S. was inflicting massive civilian casualties on Iraq and, generally, engaging in gross overkill.

¹¹ In Worcester, Massachusetts, Tuesday afternoon rallies against the war had become regularized by the second week of December.

¹² The first reports were about Sgt. Michael R. Ange's lawsuit over the constitutionality of the orders that he be transferred with his unit to the Gulf. The same story told of Marine corporal Jefferey A. Patterson's court-martial trial for refusing to be shipped to the Gulf.

By November 26, the War Resisters League, a pacifist group, was reporting "several hundred" applications for conscientious objector status by in-service soldiers while the Pentagon gave a lower number. (Gonzalez, 1990; LeMoyne 1990a)

¹³ On December 9, Bush claimed in a speech that his "alliance" was firm on the need for war against Iraq even though there were no longer hostages and even if Iraq pulled out of Kuwait. (Dowd, 1990b)

¹⁴ See photo *New York Times*, December 10 1990: A13. On the same page the *Times* ran a story about the difficulty that military recruiters were having in bringing young people into service.

¹⁵ See *New York Times*, 17 December 1990: B14 for an example of the ad.

¹⁶ By reconstructing the origins of the POW/MIA issue and the history of how the emotions surrounding the issue were manipulated by a small number of zealots who made the issue theirs during the 1970s and 1980s, Franklin's study helps us see the affinity between the mythology of POW/MIA abandonment and the hostility toward those who opposed the Gulf war.

¹⁷ Operation Eagle was founded during the fall of 1990 by two retired Marines, Paul F. Roughan and Ray M. Kelley, although it was incorporated in Massachusetts on 25 February, 1991. Articles of Incorporation for Operation Eagle were obtained from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

¹⁸ Most of the information on Operation Eagle comes from copies of its own literature and a collection of newspaper stories kept on file at the Catholic Worker house in Worcester, Massachusetts.

¹⁹ At Chandler Magnet school in Worcester, Massachusetts, the second story windows visible to hundreds of college students commuting to Worcester State College across the street were adorned with large yellow bows throughout the war period.

²⁰ Horowitz wrote, "To disarm their crisis, [Gulf-war protesters] volunteer their past 'mistakes' like spitting on U.S. soldiers returning from Vietnam.

²¹ This story uses interviews with leading antiwar activists like Todd Gitlin to validate the idea that the movement was hostile to Vietnam veterans.

²² I was stationed at Fort Hamilton during the summer and fall months of 1968.

²³ Until the memoirs are written, we might not know how consciously the Administration pursued the tactic of switching from one reason to another in order to make nonsense out of any effort to reason what the war was about. In a moment of rare incisiveness, however, the *New York Times* suggested on November 1, 1990 that the tactic, too, had been rehearsed and was purposeful. Referring to the way the Administration had handled Congress during the just-completed struggle over the budget, the *Times* wrote, "In an eerie replay of the budget ordeal, the President and his advisers are talking in different voices, sending different messages and moving back and forth between opposing positions—sometimes at the same moment." The *Times'* suggestion, however, that the resulting "confusion" was functioning to "redirect the public's attention in the week before elections away from the budget battle" seems too superficial. Far more than redirecting attention, the shuffling of narratives was rendering attention to the Gulf war, in any cognitive sense, nearly impossible. See Dowd (1990a).

²⁴ This is Virginia Carmichael's explication of how perfecting myths perform (1990: 1-7). She attributes the notion of perfecting myth to Kenneth Burke. (1961: 240-241)

²⁵ The best of these is John R. MacArthur (1992) and Kellner (1992).

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PAC MAN, PATRIOTS, AND THE HIGH-TECH POST BABY-BOOM POSTMODERN CULTURE

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In criticism of the Gulf War, a common complaint was that the mass media coverage of the war resembled a video game. The metaphor stopped there, however. The question that remains unanswered is, "Why is this a criticism and not a compliment?"

This article will examine video games and some of the men who play them, and attempt to draw a connection between those games and the news coverage of the Persian Gulf War. How is it that the young adults of this country were the heart of the antiwar movement in the 1960s, but not in the 1990s? How was consent manufactured and a hegemony maintained? I will argue that video games are part of a new type of formation of capitalism, the supersystem, and that they played a significant role in the mustering of support among young adult males for the Persian Gulf War.

DEFINING FEATURES OF THE VIDEO GAME

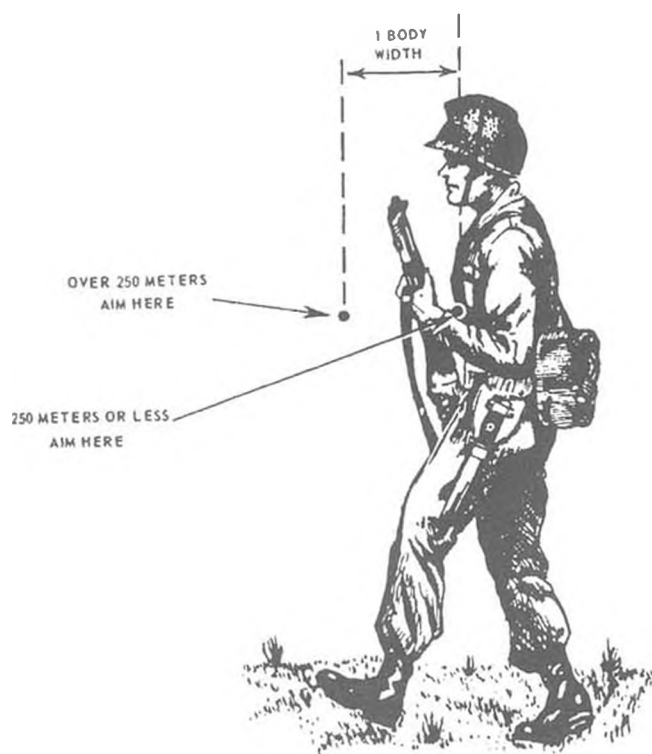
Video games have developed to the point where it is impossible to make overarching statements about their nature. They have developed in style and complexity so that one cannot do a detailed reading of them without clarifying which types are to be talked about. In this paper, I will deal mostly with those video games that are action-oriented (fast-paced, requiring active attention and physical exertion), as opposed to strategic games (without time limits, relying more on extended thinking about the game). Much of the paper will attempt to trace some prominent features found in a majority of action-based games, though most of these will also apply to video games in general to varying degrees. These games are also single or two-player games, not the newer networked games which have developed to accommodate multiple players and have different dynamics.

The narrative structure of video games is similar to that of the fairy tale. In *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp attempts to describe the functions which are common to all fairy tales and the characters which perform them. Propp defines the "sphere of action" for seven different character archetypes, and five of these are of use in understanding the video game. All but the *hero* variably appear in different games.

The Hero

The sphere of action of the *hero*. Constituents: departure on a search, reaction to the demands of the donor; wedding. (Propp: 80)

The typical video game is centered around a single character, an avatar, who the player controls to win the



game. This is the *hero* of Propp's analysis. Mario of *Super Mario Brothers* and Sonic of *Sonic the Hedgehog* are examples. The player must make the avatar perform certain feats to win the game, the feats varying from game to game. Mario must rescue Priscilla, Sonic must free the captured animals, etc. Nearly all video games follow a quest/search narrative of the *hero* defeating a *villain*, rescuing the *princess*, and being honored or rewarded in some way. For example, Priscilla is kidnapped, Mario proceeds to look for her, defeating the enemies who wish to stop him from completing his mission. When Mario finds the most fearsome enemy who stands in the way of his reaching Priscilla, the "boss" *villain* is defeated, and the Princess is rescued. The *princess* possibly fulfills the wedding constituent of the *hero*, but more often than not, the video game narrative never reaches that point. It is common that the avatar's quest is partly driven by the *donor*, who demands something of the *hero* in exchange for some magical assistance.

Importantly, the *hero*, when he is human, is almost always male and white.

The Villain

The sphere of action of the *villain*. Constituents: villainy; a fight or other forms of struggle with the hero; pursuit. (Propp: 79)

The second type of character in the video game is the *villain*. As in the fairy tale, the *villain* of the video game is always constituted as villainous; completely and irrevocably evil. This often begins in the game instruction manual, which provides the player with an often brief background story for the game. While each game must define its own parameters for what constitutes evil (such as the killing of one's father, an enemy spy who threatens world peace, etc.), this is not necessarily made explicit through a background story. Often the enemy is unnamed, it only exists. Simply by being in the position of the *villain* in the game structure, a character is evil. If something in the game possesses any one of the traits of the *villain* (fights with *hero*, pursues *hero*, impedes the *hero's* progress towards a goal), it occupies a category in the video game that has been assigned to a particular archetype, and, *ergo*, is a *villain*. No room exists in a video game for ambiguity and everything is strictly defined. There is always an antagonistic relationship between the *villain* and the avatar, usually fulfilling both struggle and pursuit of the *hero*.

"Good" characters often appear in "role-playing" sections of the game and are the characters with which the player positively interacts. Good characters are given more descriptions and background; i.e., more characteristics. The enemy is inaccessible in that way, usually immediately aggressive and not responsive to a "talk" command. This is another characteristic of the video game *villain*; it must remain conditionally mute. Conditionally because when it does "speak," it says exactly what is expected of it, such as, "You'll never find the Princess! Ha ha ha!" Threats and the like simply make it more satisfying to kill the enemy and verify its evil quality.

The *villain* is not only silenced in the video game, but constructed so that it can have nothing "new" to say.

The *villain* can be any race or gender, but is almost always male. If any nonwhite characters exist in the game they are most likely to be *villains*.

The Donor/Helper

The sphere of action of the *donor* (provider). Constituents: the preparation for the transmission of a magical agent; provision of the hero with a magical agent.

The sphere of action of the *helper*. Constituents: the spatial transference of the hero; liquidation of misfortune or lack; rescue from pursuit; the solution to difficult tasks; transfiguration of the hero. (Propp: 79)

A third type of character is the *donor/helper*. In the video game these archetypes often overlap and thus will henceforth be referred to as the *helper*. The *hero* acquires *helpers* who assist him in his quest in some fashion. Like the *donor*, they can give the hero some magical agent (such as the Sword of the Valiant), or prepare him for the reception of such an agent. The *helper* also provides other services such as spatial transference or rescue from pursuit (a ride on a giant eagle), filling a lack (giving the avatar some ammo), the solution to a riddle or other problem, and the transfiguration of the *hero* (a wizard who turns the avatar into a giant for a short time).

In the video games, the actions of the *helper* are often unmotivated or poorly explained. It is not apparent why there is an old man selling magic arrows in a tree stump in the middle of the dark forest, but this is not taken as strange by the player. The player expects to find assistance or helpful objects in any locale or container. Even more often than the *villain*, the *helper* has no history.

Often the *helper* appears in the form of the arms dealer. During the course of a game, the avatar will meet the "neutral" arms dealer and have the opportunity to "buy" "power-up" objects from the dealer, usually weapons. But the enemies of the avatar cannot buy weapons from the arms dealer. So while the arms dealer is often presented as a neutral character, it is really only there to assist the avatar; i.e., he is a *helper*. The *helper* is always a positive character in the narrative, one of the good guys, whether he is a healer or a weaponsmith. But the *helper's* function is to facilitate the "needs" of the *hero*, to provide him with that which he needs to complete his quest, and thus is not in any way neutral. The objects available to the avatar and those which he needs are mutually constitutive. That is to say, if the *helper* provides it, then the *hero* needs it. These objects are not necessarily given in response to a prior need, but their existence is part of the structure of the game itself and thus constituting need in and of themselves. This is the basis of the "goodness" of the *helper*; his existence serves to make the completion of the quest possible.

The Princess

The sphere of action of a *princess* (a sought-for person)... Constituents: ... marriage. (Propp: 79)

At this point a digression into motivation is fruitful:

By motivations are meant both the reasons and the aims of personages which cause them to commit various acts. Motivations often add to a tale a completely distinctive, vivid coloring, but nevertheless motivations belong to the most inconstant and unstable elements of the tale. (Propp: 75)

Propp's observations on motivations in the fairy tale are particularly relevant to an understanding of video games. Like the fairy tale, the video game uses motivations as ornamentation, not structure. This is evident when one observes "that completely identical or similar acts are motivated in the most varied ways." (Propp: 75) The essential quality of the character determines his or her motivation. The *villain* in a video game might drive away the *hero* out of envy, fear, or competition, but "in all of these cases expulsion is motivated by the greedy, evil, envious, suspicious character of the villain." (Propp: 76) This can apply to whichever character archetype one examines, *villain* or *hero*, *helper* or *princess*. Motives for villainy are often absent from the video game, like the fairy tale, and "motivations formulated in words are alien to the [video game] on the whole, and... may be considered with a great degree of probability as new formations." (Propp: 76)

In those tales in which no villainy is present, the function "A" (lack) serves as its counterpart, while "B" (dispatch) appears as the first function. One may observe that a dispatch because of a lack is also motivated in the most varied ways.

An initial shortage or lack represents a situation... But the moment comes when the dispatcher or searcher suddenly realizes that something is lacking, and this moment is dependent upon a motivation causing dispatch, or an immediate search. (Propp: 76)

Here Propp is describing the way a lack is a source of motivation for the *hero*. For example, the prince realizes that his shoes have been stolen (he becomes aware of the lack) and goes out looking for them (the moment of realization causes a search). The dispatcher could be the prince's father who is missing his shoes and sends the prince out to find them. What is essential here is that the *lack is villainous*. The condition of lack is bad, and only the liquidation of the lack can restore the situation to its proper and good state.

Of the functions of the *princess* which Propp defines, that of the marriage is the only one which always concerns both the fairy tale and video game. The *princess*, as is easily guessed, is most frequently the source of motivation for the *hero*. She is the lack which must be liquidated, and this is done in the marriage function. The *villain* has captured her and she must be rescued. If villainy is that which causes the lack, as much as she impedes the fulfillment of the quest through her absence,

the *princess* is villainous. Thus, the ideal *princess* is one who is completely submissive and accessible to the *hero*. It is important then that in the video game, white women most often fulfill the *princess* archetype. (I have never seen nor heard of a game whose *princess* was not white.) The ideal woman in a video game is a *princess*, with all of the gender and racial stereotyping that this entails. However, the marriage function of the *princess* changes radically from the fairy tale to the video game as we shall see shortly. (While it is tempting to use the psychoanalytic approach in the discussion of the lack, I have neither the desire nor the background to make such a connection. Rather, I want to focus our attention on the way that the lack is made part of the narrative structure of the video game.)

Whether Ivan sets out to obtain a wonderful object because his evil sister or a wicked tsar wants to deceive him, or because his father is ill, or because the father has dreamed of a wonderful thing—all this has no influence on the structure of the course of action, i.e., on the search as such, as we shall see later. One may observe in general that the feelings and intentions of the *dramatis personae* do not have an effect on the course of action in any instances at all. (Propp: 78)

Both the fairy tale and the video game contain motivations only as derivations from the structure of the course of action; i.e., the action pre-exists the motive. For example, the ghosts in *Pac Man* are recognized as villains because they pursue the *hero*, and the reason for their pursuit is made explicit only by their location within the particular relationship they have with him.

Video games often progress in stages, each new level getting harder and harder. Within the game, these stages function as minor climaxes. The avatar completes the first level by finding and defeating the boss *villain* at the end of the level. Immediately, the player begins his journey on the next level where he will eventually face the next boss *villain*. Avatar X fights his way through various minor nasties to the end of level Y to defeat boss monster Z. the game narrative is composed of a series of minor narratives which are miniature duplicates of the overall narrative. Like the fairy tale:

... any [video game] element... can, as it were, accumulate action, can evolve into an independent story, or can cause one. But like any living thing, the [video game] can generate only forms that resemble itself. If any cell of a [video game] becomes a small [game] within a larger one, it is built, as we shall see later, according to the same rules as any [video game]. (Propp: 78)

This narrative extends outside of the game so that when a game is finished, there is a sequel in which yet another creature menaces the good people of Happyville. But because the structure of video games is so similar across different games, there will always be a sequel. There need not be an official *Sonic the Hedgehog II*; another game with a similar structure will suffice. The macro narrative of the video game guarantees an endless supply of evil to be defeated.

There are two common planes of existence in the video game: *background* and *foreground*. The *foreground* is where all the action of the game happens. It is the plane on which things can be effected; objects retrieved, monsters slain, traps sprung, etc. The *background* is simply the backdrop or atmosphere of the game which has no effect other than to provide aesthetic pleasure and narrative continuity. Mostly the *background* consists of the terrain upon which the avatar travels—trees, grass, sky, etc. Sometimes people or beings appear in the *background* and they are no more or less relevant than the trees or lamps or other inanimate objects on that plane. For example, in sports games it is common to have an audience who watches the diegetic game. Though the people in the audience move around and smile and cheer, they have no effect on the outcome of the game. The difference is one of the insubstantial vs. the substantial, with the substantial being what “matters” in the game.

CONSUMPTION: INSERT COIN TO CONTINUE: 10, 9, 8...

A supersystem is a network of intertextuality constructed around a figure or group of figures from pop culture who are either fictional (like TMNT, the characters from *Star Wars*, the Super Mario Brothers, the Simpsons, the Muppets, Batman, and Dick Tracy) or “real” (like PeeWee Herman, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, Madonna, Michael Jackson, the Beatles, and most recently, the New Kids on the Block). In order to be a supersystem, the network must cut across several modes of image production; must appeal to diverse generations, classes, and ethnic subcultures, who in turn are targeted with diverse strategies; must foster “collectability” through a proliferation of related products; and must undergo a sudden increase in commodification, the success of which reflexively becomes a “media event” that dramatically accelerates the growth curve of the system’s commercial success. (Kinder: 123)

In Kinder’s *Playing with Power*, she describes the formation of what she terms the “supersystem,” and uses the example of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle phenomenon to demonstrate their function as the unifying locus in a network of consumption. Propp’s observation about the uniformity of the fairy tale narrative structure is important in understanding video games’ role as both part of a supersystem and a microsystem built along the same rules. The internal economy of the fairy tale and video game is the only constant across different texts. This is similar to the supersystem, whose network is composed of constants of structure rather than theme; i.e., no matter who is popular their image will appear on T-shirts, in comics, movies, TV, etc. We might then describe a continuity of thematic structuring systems beginning at the micro-level of the game within the game and extending to the level of a global economy. At each level of production, there are internally consistent structures despite the particular theme. But the structures themselves produce thematic trajectories which are discernible in the texts produced by those consistent structures.

One of the primary thematic trajectories of the video game is consumption. A wide range of objects are consumed, often linked to the particular theme of the game. These objects range from pieces of fruit to Coke cans to people. (The video game *Rampage* has the player control Godzilla-like creatures who need to feed on people to survive.) The popular game *Pac Man* involves what can only be described as a huge yellow mouth which the player guides through a maze in an effort to consume as many pellets as possible. What links these edible objects together is their value in contemporary consumer economies. The objects are often not only food items; they are sometimes high-ticket merchandise—everything from radios, TVs, computers, houses, cars, drugs, gemstones, and (most obviously) money appears as prizes or “power-ups.”

Video games often revolve around a cycle of consumption which is never-ending. For example, a car-racing game might start the player with a low-end car with inferior speed and handling. The player must then win races and get prize money to buy a better car (or upgrade the current one with new engines, tires, etc.). The new or improved car is used to win harder races and win more money to buy an even better car, which of course is only used to win more races. Even games which have an “end” often have sequels or add-on modules which allow the player to continue to play.

In the typical video game, you meet people, kill them, take their money and buy more weapons. The narrative of consumption requires murder. Thus, there are two primary activities in video games; killing and consuming.

POWER-UPS

Why consume? In the video game, consumption is linked to empowerment. The player’s avatar (Pac Man, Mario, Sonic, etc.) gains power through the consumption of special items. I will begin with a single example, *Pac Man*. As I have described earlier, the plot of the game involves consuming pellets in a large maze. There is no stated object of the game, but the apparent goal is to get a high score and put one’s name on the Top Player’s list. Consuming pellets adds points to the player’s score, but the game requires more than simply navigating a maze. The Pac Man is being chased through the maze by four ghosts, who will “kill” him if they come into contact with him. However, if the Pac Man consumes one of four large “super” pellets in the maze, the tables are temporarily turned. For a few seconds after eating the super pellet, Pac Man can “eat” the ghosts who have turned purple and now run away from him. In this case, consumption of a special object (i.e., large pellet) empowers the Pac Man. Notably, this empowerment takes the form of allowing the Pac Man to consume his enemies.

Consumption as empowerment is one of the dominant narratives of video games. Eating or retrieving special objects gives the player’s avatar additional powers or abilities or longevity that it didn’t have before. This can be as simple as the accumulation of points (through consumption) in the form of a score. The most common benefit given for accruing points is that of the extra life.

At a specified point total, the player is given another back-up avatar to replace the current one when it "dies." For example, in *Pac Man*, the player begins the game with three lives, i.e., when the player is caught by the ghosts three times the game is over. This common game mechanic forms the association

consumption = life.

The rule is not "he who has the most toys wins," but "he who has the most toys doesn't die." Life is measured in terms of the video game itself; the more lives the player has, the longer the game may be played. This is, ultimately, what empowerment is constituted as in the video game; the extension of the game itself.

Women are often circulated as the ultimate goal of the game or as a marker of progress, but they are never offered as a prize to be consumed; the *princess* can never be married. She must remain the object of desire, a lack, that which keeps the cycle of consumption going. In Sierra's *Leisure Suit Larry*, this is clearly the point of the game—to get Larry (the player) laid. But the narrative of the game is one misstep after another, a series of incidents in which Larry almost gets a woman, but is frustrated. Even the end of the game, which has Larry "getting laid," is another frustration because this happens off-screen. One can only purchase the next game and continue the cycle (the *Larry* cycle is notably on its sixth installment). Another popular game, *Donkey Kong*, makes the player the plumber Mario, who must rescue his true love Priscilla from an enormous ape. The ape and Priscilla are at the top of every screen, but when Mario reaches them, the ape picks up Priscilla and walks off-screen with her. The game never ends, it is only a series of frustrations. Women don't exist on the *foreground* (plane of action), always the *background*. Passively waiting for their men, women are held out as the enticement for the continuation of the cycle of consumption.

MURDER: THE PLEASURE OF DEATH

Longevity and empowerment are important to the video game because the world of the game is one which fosters paranoia and fear. In most games, almost everything in the game contains the threat of annihilation, a *nuclear threat*. Nearly every character exists for one reason only: to stop or kill the player's avatar. For example, in *Pac Man*, the ghosts seem to exist simply to chase Pac Man around the maze in an attempt to kill him.

The fear generated by the threat of annihilation exists to continue the cycle of consumption. The game must extract an affective investment from the player to make the player want to continue the game, and thus invest capital into the game by putting more coins in the machine or buying another cartridge. Thus it is in the economic interest of game designers to both threaten the player (big monster) and give the player the means with which to eliminate that threat (big gun). In a sense, the game creates a lack which the player must fill with the means supplied by the game. But this lack can never actually be filled; the game is structured as to maintain

desire (*lack*). Thus the means given to the player with which to fulfill his desire can never be adequate to the task. In *Pac Man*, the supply of super pellets is replenished regularly, but so are the ghosts who chase Pac Man around the maze. The economic imperative of the video game requires the maintenance of desire, not its elimination.

It is no accident then that the other primary theme of video games is murder. Desire is the lack and the means of its liquidation. One of the most common tools in any contemporary mass media narrative is, of course, the gun. The lack is countered with the gun. This economy of desire is necessary to the capitalist imperative of the video game. Because murder is such a strong theme, power-ups often take the form of enhancing the ability to kill or destroy. There are five basic types of power-ups: 1) consumption of a power object (*Patriot Missile*), 2) destruction of an object or property (*baby milk factory*), 3) killing of a special enemy—often followed by consumption of remains (*Saddam's Corpse*), 4) purchasing of power item at shop or designated zone (*Yellow Ribbon*), or 5, simple accumulation of points—done through killing mostly (*Iraqi planes shot down: 30*).

The most common narrative feature of video games is the *hero* as mass murderer. The player's avatar is required to murder to progress through the game narrative. The murders are justified for any number of reasons; revenging the murder of a family member, stopping the forces of evil from overrunning the innocent people of Happyville, self-defense, etc. Sometimes no justification is given; murder just happens. As we have seen in Propp, no particular motive is necessary for the actions of the *hero*, rather, the enemy must be murdered because the structure of the game allows no other options. The joystick controls are "left," "right," "jump," and "shoot," not "left," "right," and "negotiate peaceful solution." The narrative construction of the *villain* assures the player that the enemies are evil killers, even though in the typical video game the only killing being done is on the part of the avatar.

In the video game, consumption of objects empowers the avatar most generally in terms of longevity. These items, which are often provided by a *helper*, assist the avatar by either helping him avoid being killed or to kill more effectively and thus survive longer. Objects give the avatar bigger guns, tougher skin, more ammunition, etc. These objects are also guarded by, carried by, or in the remains of the *villain*. To get them, the avatar must kill the enemy. When killed, the enemy leaves behind not a corpse, but a clip of ammunition or a gun or a bag of gold (used to buy more weapons). Or the enemy is no longer blocking the avatar from reaching a treasure. Or the avatar must kill the enemy so that it can consume the body of the victim to survive. In the video game, any object is potentially a source of capital (points, money, weapons, etc.) or an obstacle or container of capital which must be circumvented (often by destruction) to obtain access to capital. The structure of the video game requires murder and destruction so that the process of consumption can continue.

At this point it is important to note that there are two types of consumables in video games; objects which give the player points and/or have effects on the plane of the *background* and objects which empower the avatar to kill and survive, affecting the *foreground*. In the typical game, the latter is far more important than the former. For example, one game might have gold coins which the avatar collects to accrue points, and a special gun which lets the avatar kill more effectively. The gun is the far more important object to be consumed. Why then bother accruing points by collecting coins? Often the game is structured to give more weight to those point accruing items by making their collection a requirement for continuation of the game. For example, to complete a section of the game, the player might have to collect five special gems before he is allowed to move on. But if the object has no effect on the longevity of the game, then it is always secondary. Ultimately, the player desires weapons more than any other object as weapons are commonly the tools for survival available in the *foreground*.

Interestingly, one ordinarily cannot kill *helpers*. The *villains* are usually in the *foreground*, while the *helpers* are usually on the *background*. This means that only the *villain*, who by definition should die, is the one that can and does die. If some allies do exist on the *foreground* and are killed, then the player is sometimes penalized in some way and cannot complete the game ("You shot the hostage so the Chief relieves you from duty"). This creates an animosity towards the ally. It is seen as a nuisance, another obstacle in the way of the avatar. Sometimes there is no penalty for killing the *helper*, so the avatar merrily continues on its way. The "penalty" in this case is that the avatar is deprived of the assistance of the *helper*. Characters in video games are either used by the avatar to help it consume, or they are obstacles to consumption and must be destroyed or avoided.

Death in the video game is both sanitized and stylized. *Pac Man*, for example, has ghosts which simply disappear and turn into a score (points accrued for consumption) when they are eaten. It is rare that bodies are left behind and rarer still that those bodies remain on the *foreground*. Death is an aesthetic experience to be enjoyed. New video games and systems are impressive to their players because they achieve a new level of graphic complexity, usually most lovingly detailed in killing. The spurt of blood from a hatchet wound, the skull of the enemy bouncing down the road, the spine of the loser writhing in the palm of the victor. In *Mortal Kombat* the victor rips the spine out of the loser. The advertisements for *Mortal Kombat II* use the enticement, "Paint the Town Red," referring to the elevated gore content of the new game. Often the final "victory" animation sequence at the "end" of a game contains the most graphic violence. The pleasure in the fetishization of technology is often the pleasure of violence and death.

Why survive longer? To kill and consume more, of course! The pleasure of the video game is the playing of the game itself. Victories are simply marking points on the endless journey through the supersystem of video game narratives. If part of that narrative is about consumption, then the player enjoys consuming. If part of

that narrative of consumption requires murder, then the pleasure that the player takes in playing the game is necessarily the pleasure of murder. It is up to the player to keep the narrative going, to play the game, to insert the coin. While players ostensibly desire to complete the game (if that is possible), there is always a new game to take its place so that the cycle can begin again, a cycle which includes murder for consumption, consumption for murder.

POSTMODERNITY: PASTICHE AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

One of the functional characteristics of video games and postmodernity is what Fredric Jameson calls

... pastiche: in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum. (Jameson: 115)

Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language. (Jameson: 114)

Video games constantly appropriate various masks to give themselves form. Games have often borrowed heavily from popular literature and media (*Hunt for Red October* or *Aliens vs. Predator*), but now they have grown to the point where games spawn their own books (*Dragonlance*, *Paranoia*, *Planetfall*), TV shows (*Pac Man* or *Dragon's Lair*), and movies (*Super Mario Brothers*, *Streetfighter*, *Doom*). That is, they are now one of the sources of new supersystem strains, part of a network of capital accumulation. While often replicating narratives from popular culture and events (Gulf War to Tabloidism), their replication is simply pastiche, it loses all of its original content. Every book, TV show, and movie becomes a video game with all narratives being reduced to the form of the game. There are fantasy games, science-fiction games, games in which you conquer Rome, games in which you play an LAPD officer, but these are all simply empty shells to give shape and color to the narrative of the game. The aliens in *Space Invaders* could just as easily have been electric toasters as far as game mechanics are concerned. This is especially easy to see in the earlier games whose visual technology was so poor that one had to take on faith that the blob on the screen was Superman. Game mechanics, the building blocks of narrative, have little to do with their professed themes and quite a bit to do with reifying familiar structures.

As in Hollywood film, there is an economic motive behind this uniformity of video game structure. First, it allows for the mass production of new games by having a predefined set of objects and relationships with which to form the game. SSI, for example, makes a series of "gold box" games which all use the same "engine" to drive the game and cut down on development costs. Second, it increases sales by reducing the learning curve of new games. If a player knows how to play *Pac Man*, he or she already knows how to play *Ms. Pac Man* in the same way that the audience for *First Blood* will understand *Rambo*

instantly. Uniformity makes the games more accessible and potentially profitable.

Video games are ahistorical. They have their own diegetic sense of history based on an internal time clock, but apparently no relation to "real" history outside of the game. Power-ups are organically available as part of the terrain even if they are not living things. Internally, each game's history is unstable because the narrative structure defies motive. One cannot use a cause and effect approach to events within a video game since actions are not based on motive. Each event is a function of the fixed relationships between characters, the qualities of the *hero*, *villain*, and *helpers*. Neither do the other objects within a game have a coherent history. Thus, one is as likely to find magic mushrooms in a warehouse as one is to find a laser battery in a desert. In Sega's *Sonic the Hedgehog*, Sonic walks down an unnamed road and just happens to find a pair of magic shoes inside a television by the road. These objects have no history, they simply exist to be found and consumed, which is their function in the game structure. The first home video game system to use cartridges, the Atari 2600, came with a cartridge called *Combat*. The game had several different mini-games with tanks or planes shooting at each other. Nowhere in the game or in the documentation is there any reference to any historical moment; these tanks are part of no war; the planes never fly in a "real" sky. Units meet on an unnamed battlefield and fight simply because that is what they do. As graphic capabilities increased, more categories were added to the cast. For example, *Contra* features a white soldier, wearing what appear to be U.S. fatigues, running through the jungle shooting various guerrillas and robots who get in his way. Race, gender, and nationality are but some of the aspects added to characters. But *Contra* has more to do with *Rambo* or *Terminator* than actual events in Nicaragua. An effect of pastiche is this ahistoricity.

As technology became more sophisticated, games began appearing under the appellation of "simulation" software. These games centered around "real" situations and conflicts, ranging from the creation and management of cities (*SimCity*) or the reenactment of battles, or projections about battles that seem likely to happen (*F-15*, *688 Attack Sub*). Though claiming some connection to the real (often validated by having a famous person assist in the game design—for example, Chuck Yeager making *Advanced Combat Simulator* [ACS]), they are no more "real" than the *COPS* television show. These games are quite limited in scope, focusing on technological (planes, tanks, helicopters) rather than historical simulation. When a player flies a mission in *F-15*, the narrative includes only the briefest explanation of why or for whom the mission is being flown. The verisimilitude revolves around reproducing the technology of the plane, not historical events, people or places. These games have a history of technology and "progress," not a focus on human interaction. Though often rich in detailed technical reproduction, they are a virtual desert in transdiegetic historical contextualization.

One of the earliest developments in the forging of a historical continuity within a game is that of the "Top

Players" list. Various tagged in different games (Hall of Fame, Best Players, etc.), this is a list of the players who have achieved the highest scores (or some other method of determining rank) while playing the game. It is kept from game to game and is usually the only trans-game continuity. This replicates the "great men of history" phenomena that Fred Pfiel discusses in "Makin' Flippy-Floppy":

Politics for most of us found no place in the privatized household; while at school, from primary to college, American politics and history were at best delivered up to us in a narrative as a series of 'social problems' addressed and eventually resolved by a happily coincident series of great men, who thus rose to the top. (270)

Video game players are now those "great men," the *heroes*. An associative relationship is fostered between player and avatar. The feats performed by the avatar are considered the victories of the player himself, not the result of pre-programmed possibilities.

The associative link is further reinforced by simulation software that claims to provide some connection to a reality through the "authorship" of the celebrity whose name is on the game box, as when Chuck Yeager licensed his name to Electronic Arts for their flight simulator game. Foucault's "What is an author?" is useful in this context. Foucault notes, discussing the function of the author, that the author is "the [object] of appropriation; [a] form of property," (124) The name authenticates the experience. Fairy tales were anonymous; the addition of the author marks a shift to the overdetermined position of the video game. While the anonymous authorship of the fairy tale posed no problems because "their real or supposed age was a sufficient guarantee of their authenticity," (125) video games (like "Yeager's" ACS) urge us to imagine his influence on the game, and "this construction is assigned a 'realistic' dimension as we speak of an individual's 'profundity' or 'creativity' in [programming]." (127) Because the video game offers the illusion of choice, the fantasy of control, and confers 'expertise,' it effectively recreates the player as 'great' man, or, as shall be explained later, a New Man.

The player relates to the game's ahistoricity in a state which Fredric Jameson describes as schizophrenia:

...schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the 'I' and the 'me' over time. (Jameson: 119)

The subjectivity of the video game player can be described as schizophrenic. Playing the video game is an experience of discontinuous signifiers. Because the schizophrenic has no sense of temporality, "...the experience of the present becomes powerfully, overwhelmingly vivid and 'material': the world comes before the schizophrenic with heightened intensity, bearing a mysterious and oppressive charge of affect, glowing with hallucinatory energy." (120) While the true schizophrenic finds this an unpleas-

ant experience, it is a desirable one for the player of the video game. The player of the video game finds pleasure in schizophrenia, for the timelessness of the game becomes a haven from the outside world. If one has no sense of history, then one cannot feel responsible for anything that has occurred, or understand one's current social and political situation, or feel charged with changing what might occur.

What I want to underscore, however, is precisely the way in which the signifier in isolation becomes ever more material—or better still, literal—ever more vivid in sensory ways, whether the new experience is attractive or terrifying. (120)

The video game is composed of signifiers in isolation; it separates the signifiers from their signifieds and links up new ones according to its internal logic. It is no accident that video game players often find themselves staying up until five in the morning, sitting in front of the television. Players are immersed in the action, the materiality of the game itself. Time and history and the "outside" world cease to have relevance during the game. The game dislodges the player from their extra-diegetic sense of the "real." The player's subjectivity is momentarily and partially silenced.

Barthes discusses in "The World of Wrestling" how the wrestlers and the match actually form the physical manifestation of the abstract. Thus, abstractions such as "good" and "evil" only take on a materiality when they are enacted, such as during the wrestling match. Video games are also an enactment of the abstract, creating categories such as "good" and "evil" through the interaction of the characters on screen. However, they let the player not only watch the wrestling match, but participate in it. There is a more involved level of interaction, more participation in a video game than there is in a wrestling match. The player actually practices in the video game what is simply performed for him in the wrestling match. The level of involvement increases the schizophrenic nature of the video game. The more history is erased, the more the game demands his attention, the more the player is encouraged to lose himself inside the reality of the game.

If the first move of the video game is to dislodge the player's sense of identity from his own historical context, then the next is to put in its place a new identity created by the game itself. The silence that is created by the game then becomes a blank slate upon which it can inscribe another subjectivity, that of the New Man.

SUBJECTIVITIES: AM I MARIO OR LUIGI?

In "Constructing the *I/We* as Difference," Ileana Rodriguez describes the *I/We* split in guerrilla texts. Part of the project of the texts she discusses is the constitution of the New Man, a "presumably revolutionary masculine alterity, ousting 'bourgeois' masculinity." To effectively mark off the New Man from the bourgeois subject, the bourgeois man must be feminized. This New Man freedom fighter "shares the longing of the people for liberation," but, "In this sharing the warrior not only appropri-

ates what he lacks, i.e., the people's aching for freedom, but also marks a difference between himself and the people, a lack." (Rodriguez: 38) Thus, the New Man is constituted as different from "the people" even in the process of "trying to define the warrior as the people." (38)

Video game structure interpellates the player in such a way as to cause a conflation of subjectivities between the player and avatar of a video game. The player is Mario, Pac Man, whoever. When talking to a fellow game player, one asks, "How do I get the magic ring away from the lizard?" instead of, "How do I make Mario get the magic ring away from the lizard?" Everything in the video game addresses the player as if he was the avatar. "You need ten more gems to finish this level," or "Great job!" are not addressed to the avatar, but to the player. Even the boxes the games come in and the advertisements for the games are part of the interpellating apparatus which summons the player into the position of the avatar. ("You will defeat terrible monsters! You will win the love of the Princess!") The avatar is a transparent subject. It is not Mario who ultimately rescues Priscilla, but the player.

The subject of the video game functions similarly to the New Man. While the game attempts to constitute the player as a defender/savior/liberator of "the people," it paradoxically constructs the subject as different from "the people." This is done not only in similar fashion to the guerrilla texts, but is even part of the very structure of the game. The avatar is always on the *foreground*, while "the people" are always in the *background*. The player has the illusion of full authorial control, that he is the sole determinant of history. The New Man is the "great man" who is an individual agent of history, not part of a collective effort.

Similar to the guerrilla texts, the New Man/avatar is *always* a man. While claiming a revolutionary identity, the guerrilla is not about changing the fundamental social structures which compose his society. The bourgeois subject must be deposed because he is (constructed as) feminine. Sexism and homophobia are constructions mobilized in the struggle for national liberation, but whether liberation for the nation is achieved or not, women and homosexuals are not "freed." Sexism and homophobia are part of the basic narrative structures, the object relations of the texts about which Rodriguez writes. These narrative structures function in the same way in fairy tales and video games. The narrative of the video game is revealing of objects and their relations, the playing out of power structures: the video game establishes the player, through the avatar, as not only a man, but *the* man, more masculine than all of the enemies and allies in the game. The enemies in the game are repeatedly feminized through multiple penetrations and beatings, ending up prostrate or invisible when the avatar is through with them. Even when there is an enemy who seems to be similarly "manly," such as the head *villain* at the end of the game, he is always represented as twisted or perverted in some way which negates his humanity and masculinity.

This slippage in subject positions further interpellates the player, creating a sense of national identity. If the player is Mario, and Mario is a citizen of Happyland,

then the player is a citizen of Happyland. In a typical game, the player is a member of a village sent out to stop the marauding dragon and rescue the kidnapped maiden (the *hero's* quest is to rescue the *princess* from the *villain*). The game addresses the player as "young warrior" or "noble knight," while the people of the town are "villagers;" the player is *not* a "villager." There is a split between the *I* (Mario) and the *We* (Citizens of Happyland). Paradoxically, the designation of the player as from the village posits a nationstate or similar entity to which the player belongs, but from which the player is separated.

Defense of the nationstate entity is linked to consumption through the video game. To defend the village, one must play the game which, by definition, requires the outlay of capital—the game must be purchased. For example, the arcade game *The Avengers* pleads, "America still needs your help!" whenever the player loses all three lives. The digitized voice begs while a timer on the screen lets the player know he has ten seconds to put another quarter in the machine in order to continue his quest. Arcade games are often designed so that they cannot be completed on one quarter, necessitating a pocket full of change to finish the game. Advertising for home computer or video game systems includes an entreaty to save "the people." "The dark army encroaches. King Richard falls and Scotia beckons you..." (Interaction: 16) Of course, to save the kingdom, one must buy the game. The collapse of subjectivities in the discourse of the video game is motivated by the continuation of the cycle of consumption.

As in the genre of the testimonial, an alliance is formed between the player and a collective entity (such as the nationstate) through the transparent subject of the avatar. Unlike the literature of testimony, however, the video game structure provides immediate means to assist the nationstate entity of the game. The player can "help" Mario through his travails, help Chuck Yeager fight off MIGs because the apparatus which creates the subject is also the sole means of assisting the subject. Kinder discusses the way in which membership in the "turtle" collective is signified by the wearing of a T-shirt: since the wearing of the T-shirt requires the purchase of that shirt, membership in the collective is based on capital outlay. Similarly, the video game is part of a network of consumption, part of a supersystem which requires capital to participate. One must buy the mechanism of assistance, the video game, to become a member of the *hero's* collective.

THE UNBEARABLE WHITENESS OF BEING

This brief subcultural analysis is not backed up by hard ethnographic research. It is largely based on my experience as a member of the subculture, the high-tech post-baby boom professional managerial class (HTPMC). Far more detailed and careful study remains to be done.

In *Learning to Labor*, Paul Willis describes how British working-class youth culture helps to prepare youth for working-class jobs. The culture of the "lads" seemed on the surface to be an oppositional subculture, yet those characteristics and activities which made them

"oppositional" are what prepared them for work in their class fragment. The very games that these "lads" played games them the skills which would later make them successful on the shopfloor. Similarly, hegemonic subcultures also produce workers with certain skills that are appropriate for their careers. Like the "lads," the HTPMC play games which set them up for their role in the economic hierarchy. The subculture of the HTPMC produces not only the skills for their careers in the economic structure of late-capitalism, but it produces both a distinct epistemology and ontology within its members. Through video games, I will attempt to trace these patterns as they interconnect the leisure time and work time of the HTPMC.

The boys and men in question are white, middle- or upper-middle class, employed in high-tech industries, and/or are often the children of those employed in such industries, and sometimes stereotyped as "geeks" or "nerds." That is to say, for whatever reason, they are in some way barred from the closest circles of social power, though they are quite firmly entrenched in economic prosperity. They do not have full access to those things which are coded as highly valuable in our culture, not the least of which is beautiful women. They are alienated from cliques constituted by dominant social norms of appearance and behavior. The teenage boys who belong to this subculture have access to discretionary cash but are limited in social mobility by cultural and political mechanisms. Through video games, however, they can virtually possess that which is materially unavailable to them—they can be the good-looking athletes who get the beautiful cheerleaders, the barbarians who stand on a mountain of gold with admiring wenches hanging on their ankles. Unlike most youth culture pursuits, boys often continue to play video games as they mature into adults; the evidence is in the growing adult market. After these men graduate from college and become white collar workers, they still play video games (often of increasing complication). Even if these men stop playing video games as they grow older, the paradigms they learned in their play are likely to continue to be operative on more adult levels (*à la* CNN).

In video game discourse, the focus on technology which the HTPMC consumes (through advertisements, trade publications, magazines, gossip, conventions) is linked to the fetishization of that technology in—and the endless cycle of consumption under—capitalism. Within the video game, the power-up is an object (often a technological device) which empowers the avatar. Outside the video game, the power-up is known as an "upgrade." And upgrade is the addition of a component to a device or system which enhances or expands its capabilities and usefulness. Having its genesis in computer discourse, the concept of the upgrade has now been established firmly within the mainstream media. One can hear a car dealer talking about upgrading a car model or a contractor upgrading the insulation of a house. Technology is generally accepted as empowering and every object within the sphere of one's existence is subject to being upgraded. The capitalist imperative of

the upgrade is obvious, for upgrades are always products to be purchased.

For the HTPMC, the experience of history is mediated by the discourse of the upgrade. The HTPMC is constantly talking about computer hardware and software release dates (the moment a new piece of technology will arrive and make life better). This results in a continual deferment of the present. Jean Baudrillard comments about this new logic in terms of automobiles:

No more fantasies of power, speed, and appropriation linked to the object itself, but instead a tactic of potentialities linked to usage: mastery, control and command, an optimization of the play of possibilities offered by the car as vector and vehicle, and no longer as object of psychological sanctuary. (127)

Unfortunately, he misses the connection to gender and elides the different ways in which women relate to technology. What is important to men is not using devices for some constructive purpose, but simply possessing them for their capabilities. Men are interested in how their devices compare to similar devices, and how the performance of their devices can be improved. These concerns apply to all technological devices, including products of leisure. There is a tacit assumption that future devices will always be more entertaining than current devices.

Because the player spends so much time in the discourse of technofetishism and playing games, he doesn't have the time to keep up with politics and world events except in the most superficial of ways. Nor does he have the desire to do so, because the world of video game culture is so much brighter than "real" life can ever be. "Private 'telematics': each person sees himself at the controls of a hypothetical machine, isolated in a position of perfect and remote sovereignty, at an infinite distance from his universe of origin." (Baudrillard: 128) There is always a new product, a new upgrade, a new game which is faster, slicker, more entertaining than before. Player's lives within video game culture are filled with successes; they have rescued princesses, defeated dragons, and conquered worlds. The HTPMC is not at the controls of a hypothetical machine, but a real machine dispersed over a network of technology. The player is in a position of perfect sovereignty over the video game, but the constitution of the limits of control had been predetermined by the structure of the game itself.

The complete immersion in video game culture brings about a kind of schizophrenia in the player. What can the outside world offer him? Human suffering is silenced by his narrative of progress. Baudrillard describes this narrative as a "satellitization of the real," or the "hyperrealism of simulation." (128) The "real" world is distanced and mediated through technology, bringing it all up on the computer (or TV) screen:

As soon as this scene is no longer haunted by its actors and their fantasies, as soon as behavior is crystallized on certain screens and operational terminals, what's left appears only as a large useless body, deserted and condemned. The real itself appears as a large useless body. (129)

The screen renders the real flat, makes human events fit into its own forms and structures; it glows with Jameson's "hallucinatory energy."

Susan Willis claims that "children have difficulty conceiving of their toys as having been made.... [since] commodity fetishism erases production and presents the toy store (or TV commercial) as the toy's point of origin. (Kinder: 123)

The myth of Santa Claus reinforces a child's obliviousness to the conditions of production. Happy elves in the North Pole make toys year round in a blissful state supported by endless cookies baked by Mrs. Claus and delivered to them *gratis* by the Great White Father himself. While children don't necessarily believe in Santa anymore, the particular cognitive structure which encourages a selective replacement of origin with myth may still be operative. Video games appear to be produced in a similarly utopic circuit, where the well-off programmer(s) are considered the "author(s)" and sole laborers, the happy elves of the electron. However, this leaves out the process of the manufacture and distribution of the components of the video game cartridge and system. In "Women's Place in the Integrated Circuit," Racheal Grossman discusses the conditions under which Malaysian women work in electronics factories producing the circuit boards which make possible the video game. It is unlikely that one will hear from Motorola about the gross exploitation of women's bodies and the slave-like existence of these women. The oppression and suffering upon which the electronics industry is built is silenced in the discourse of technofetishism.

Simulations claim a newness, a connection to the "latest" technology which is only virtually available to most people. However, the class fraction which I am describing often does have a connection to this technology at the workplace. Some of the men who play these video games are the white-collar workers of the high-tech industries known in the DC area as the "Beltway Bandits." The corporations and companies that employ them are the ones who make the technology that is fetishized in video games. Since these industries are often involved in defense contracting, it is in the direct interest of these white collar workers to support defense spending and, thus, war.

The culture of video games prepares these men for their positions in high-tech industries in much the same way that the culture of the "lads" that Paul Willis describes prepares the "lads" for work in the blue-collar shopfloor sector. By immersing themselves in video game culture, these boys/men are acquiring a literacy with the technology that they will use in the workplace. The hours spent playing games, discussing strategies, tweaking the performance of their computers, etc., produce a familiarity with technology that will help them access positions within high-tech industries. When a teenage boy creates a game program on his home computer, he is using the same skills that will be required later to produce missile tracking software. Note the recent development and use of police robots which are controlled remotely by officers and sent into dangerous situations to dig suspects out of

hiding places. The systems used to control the robot resemble closely those used in video games, requiring use of joysticks, video screens, and fire buttons. Those hand-eye coordination skills can both kill and increase employability.

The discourse of technofetishism circulated in periodicals, through friends, and now through international networks, allows a broad understanding of the latest developments in technology and an idea of its uses. This discourse creates more efficient workers, who are able to guide their employers to make the "right" purchases of equipment, and then learn to use that equipment quickly. Unlike the "lads" whose culture is about limiting the demands of their employers through a sort of guerrilla warfare on the shopfloor, the HTPMC are absolutely committed to pushing the envelope on their work. Because of the intense fetishization of technology, these men spend a great deal of time making it more efficient. Hours are spent customizing computers and networks, tightening the cybernetic loop, making their employers more profit.

At then of it all is a woman—the ultimate prize(s) in the game of life. The HTPMC often sits around and brags about his computer and the upgrades that he has added. To upgrade is to display one's financial assets, to display one's skill as a player in the game of capital consumerism. Women are objects in this discourse of the upgrade. Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft and consequently one of the richest men in America, is the ultimate illustration of the success story of the "nerd" who got the beautiful girl through his incredible ability to play the game (one look at Bill and it is easy to assume that the girl didn't marry him for his stunning good looks). Gates' Gatsby-esque success story is popular because it functions as a model for the supersystem of success. Since men I am talking about are not Bill Gates (i.e., loaded and powerful), the video game industry steps in to accommodate their desires with virtual women from Priscilla to Virtual Valerie. (*Virtual Valerie* is a sexually explicit game in which the player goes on a "date" with Valerie and sexual hijinks ensue.) It is no accident that video game subculture includes few women, since the ideal woman in video games is completely passive and submissive, the *princess*. As women gain more independence and power, virtual women become popular outlets for the male sexism which, for real women, has become unacceptable. Here are a few lines of an ad which appeared in a computer magazine recently:

Now You Can Have Your Own Girlfriend

GIRLFRIEND is the first VIRTUAL WOMAN. You can watch her, talk to her, ask her questions and relate with her. Over 100 actual VGA photographs allow you to see your girlfriend as you ask her to wear different outfits and guide her into different sexual activities. GIRLFRIEND comes with base software and GIRLFRIEND LISA. Additional girls will be added. (Bryan)

Note that the company plans to offer upgrades—new women to be consumed and subjugated, a virtual harem. Since HTPMC men are generally conservative about

sexuality (since most of their experience and knowledge comes from standard heterosexual porn) and social misfits as well, virtual women or women with low self-esteem become the only available outlet for their manufactured desire. (Yes, they can have real girlfriends, but only women who don't mind being—or playing—Priscilla.) If charges of sexism in video games are brought up by real women, their objections are deflected by the claim that the situations are virtual, and that the game is mere entertainment ("it's a game, don't get upset!"). Because of the commodification/objectification of women's bodies (also present in the larger culture) and the discourse of the upgrade, the players find the consumption of virtual women to be empowering.

AN EXAMPLE OF PLAY: GULF FIGHTER II: THE NEXT CHALLENGE

HTPMC men find ways to express their mode of living—consumption of power-ups—in their politics. They often support and work for NASA and the defense industry, organizations which design and build life-size power-ups. They "ooh" and "aah" over each new jet fighter, each new cruise missile, each new submarine. They discuss the capabilities and design of these items, wear pictures of them on their T-shirts, and then play video game simulations on their home computers (*F-19 Stealth Fighter*, *B-1 Nuclear Bomber*, *688 Attack Sub*). When the Persian Gulf war began, the HTPMC went into a frenzy of consumptive activity. It was no accident that the release of a video game called *Persian Gulf Inferno* coincided with the beginning of hostilities. The game's *hero* is a Navy SEAL, who sneaks onto an oil rig which has been taken over by the *villains*, who are Arab terrorists with a nuclear device. The terrorists have taken the white crew hostage and it is up to the player to rescue the hostages and find and disarm the nuclear device before the clock runs out and it explodes. En route, the player must deal with four-hundred-and-one Arabian crazies who (in digitally sampled voices) scream unintelligible epithets and attempt to shoot the avatar. During the game, the player finds power-ups—bigger and better weapons and ammunition, starting with a pistol and moving up to a fully automatic Uzi. Each hostage functions as a *helper*, who when found gives directions to enable the hero to get to the next hostage. The player can only deal with the *villains* by killing them and it is impossible to complete the game without doing so: the consumption of weapons is thus defined as empowering. As in most games, the violence is justified by the nuclear threat, in this case an actual nuclear bomb. What is most striking about this game is that the structure of the game and the coverage of the Persian Gulf war are nearly identical despite the fact that the game was designed and completed before the war. This indicates that there is some common connection between the war and the game at the level of structure rather than theme.

WARGAMES R Us: CNN AND VIDEO GAME STRUCTURE

News looks like a video game

The television news coverage of the Gulf War mirrors the structures I have just outlined as common to video games. In fact, the coverage of the war on television was commonly likened to a video game. Generally, the metaphor was offered with no explanation:

The nose-cone footage had been shown much earlier, at a press briefing conducted by Lt. Gen. Charles Horner and Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, the allied commander; CNN's John Sweeney, from Riyadh where the briefing was held, accurately compared it to "a lethal version of an arcade video game." (Shales)

The metaphor was used by representatives of every position, from the most jingoistic right-wingers to the farthest left of protesters. Few actually attempted to say that the war *was* a video game, but they did argue that the TV news coverage of the war made it *appear* to be one. This comparison was often made in reaction to the footage from American bombers which featured a giant cross-hair covering a series of explosions, as well as the much-broadcast footage of Patriots, SCUDs, and assorted artillery. (The latter footage, taken with an infrared camera, reduced the war to a spectacular play of colored lights.) But the connections between war and video games were never explored in any depth.

Gulf-war television coverage resembled a video game not only on the news stations, like CNN, but also on other networks. Chris Pierson discusses how Persian Gulf war coverage was displayed during the SuperBowl, linking both events in short updates which reported the "score" of the war on viewer's video screens. Immediately before the start of the game, a news report announced:

Planes Lost in Hostile Action

Allied:	17
Iraq:	47

The presentation of the war as a score indicates its equivalence to a game. To further link the SuperBowl to the war, the national anthem was dedicated to the "brave men and women in the Persian Gulf," and was followed by a fly-over of F-16s. A recruiting commercial for the Marines depicted Marines as knights fighting on a chess board; when the good knight struck down his enemy, the enemy disappeared in a puff of smoke. The overall effect of the coverage of the war indicated that it was a big game, and thus something to be enjoyed and celebrated. Daniel Golden came close to connecting video games with the war in his discussion of the war's similarity to a football game:

To the average couch potato, the Persian Gulf war looks more like a macabre media event. It is the first postmodern war: impersonal, almost antiseptic, scrupulously scripted and, above all, made for prime time.

Like the U.S. military, the networks are bringing out all their hardware, from computer-generated graphics to armchair strategists to lightning-bolt logos inscribed "War in the Gulf."

In fact, it's getting harder to differentiate between war and football. Which is reality, and which is metaphor? Is it the San Francisco 49ers who use the aerial assault to loosen up the ground game, or the allies? Gen. Colin Powell, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and our head coach, doesn't want the enemy to peek at our playbook. As an American pilot told an interviewer about the meager Iraqi resistance, "It's like they held a football game, and we were all prepared, and the other side didn't show up." (Gorden)

Indeed, the narratives in coverage were similar to those of a football game, but one which can only be seen on TV. While the newscasters were not seen playing video games, they did use commonly available video technology in broadcasts about the war. In a flurry of computer generated graphics, they used the Telestrator, a device used by sportcasters to show specific plays in a football game to the home audience.

Soon after the metaphorization of war as video game, there emerged a counter-theme in the discourse of the Gulf war. Strangely enough, it was not antiwar activists who were most insistent in asserting that war was *not* a video game, but those in the military and administration:

We are pretty successful in shooting the Iraqis down in the air. But there could be some combination of circumstances in which some might get through. This is war, not a video game. (Gordon)

Ironically, the people who spent the most time asserting that the war was not a video game were also the ones who most often used the video game metaphor:

"This is a rocket launcher, this is a missile launcher, and that one over there is like a real expensive video game," Marine Capt. Stephen Pace of Pensacola explained to a clutch of small boys discovering the intricacies of a Cobra helicopter. (Groer)

"We'd encounter their vehicles and we'd destroy them. We knew our systems were good but we didn't know how good until we actually used it. I was up on the turret of a Bradley and it was like playing a video game." (Ayers Jr.)

No one pointed out that part of the reason why news coverage of the war seemed so much like a video game was because reporters were allowed access only to video game-like footage doled out by the military. While complaining that the war was being treated like a video game in the press, officials were using video game metaphors themselves and disseminating video game-like materials. The assertions of Schwarzkopf and others represent a desperate attempt to be taken seriously by the public, which saw more game than war in the Gulf. But the relationship between the Gulf War and video games is far deeper than simple aesthetic similarity.

One simply has to look to the wide variety of uses video games served during the war to verify the depth of

the relationship. Everyone seemed to be enjoying video games during this war, even the President himself:

Game Boy became the electronic thumb twiddler of downtime in the Gulf war, and President Bush was photographed playing one during his hospital stay to diagnose an irregular heartbeat. (Leroux)

Not only were top officials using video games, but the armed forces in the Gulf were immersed in them. The American troops in the Gulf were the largest market for portable video games during the war.

On tanks and in tents, and even in sleeping bags, the combat troops of the '90s spend their off-hours glued to Nintendo Game Boys—a bargain, most say, at just \$87 at the post exchange.

"If they had Game Boys back in Vietnam, the sanity level would have been a lot higher," insisted Cpl. David Murray, a 22-year-old Wyoming resident and a self-confessed addict of the Nintendo game "Tetris," in which geometric shapes must be manipulated. ("War Notebook...")

They were not only playing video games in their leisure time; many had jobs which required them to play "real life" video games:

Flying a jet fighter, says one Air Force F-15 pilot, is like playing two video games at once while trying to drive a roller coaster at 600 miles per hour—often upside down or sideways. ("From New Guy....")

Something deep in the structure of video games pervaded a wide variety of activities and behaviors during the war.

Murder, what murder?

The U.S. government's reluctance to release Iraqi casualty figures followed from one of the primary propaganda lines from the early days of the war—that the Gulf war was clean, precise, bloodless, and avoided civilian targets and casualties. (Kellner: 197)

The way in which news coverage of the war narratively and structurally mirrored video games created a similar sanitizing effect. Coverage left death out of the narrative through its failure to report enemy casualty figures or show any Iraqi corpses, its failure to strongly challenge Pentagon news pool restrictions and broadcast "sensitive" footage (bodies), and its complicity in building the fairy tale narrative of Bush, vs. Hussein. Many broadcasts were composed of stock footage of the American weapons of war, diagrams of the various planes and missiles, and happy troops in the mess hall. When the bombing was over, the result of the war was the burned out heaps of Iraqi armor on the "Highway of Death." There were never pictures of the bodies quickly removed from view or the mass graves they were buried in. What "died" in the war was hardware, the Iraqi technology defeated by our superior hardware.

Like their civilian counterparts at home watching TV, the American soldiers fighting the war were distanced from the flesh and blood of their enemies through video game-like technology:

For at times, the new technology seemed to turn the battle into one giant video game: "I don't even want to see the enemy," said one U.S. pilot, explaining his tactics. "I just want to see that blip on my radar screen and wipe it off." (Sudo)

Trained on video game-like simulators, operating weapons and vehicles whose controls are video game-like, and playing video games in their spare time, the American troops' understanding of their own experience of the Gulf war was shaped by video game technology.

Collateral Damage

As in video games, murder is a fundamental part of Gulf war narratives. The cast of the war drama fits neatly into the fairy tale genre. Our *heroes* were George Bush, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, and Gen. Colin Powell. Desert Storm was the quest of Bush, a quest initiated by "the demands of the donor," the ousted Kuwaitis. (The news commentary established U.S. dependence on Kuwaiti oil, making the Kuwaiti rulers a kind of *donor*.) The *villain* was played by Saddam Hussein.

The narrative structure of the war was built on a set of object relations similar to that of the video game. The *villain*, Saddam Hussein, is uncomplicatedly evil and exists simply to commit villainy. Frequent stories of Iraqi soldiers gassing Kurds and killing Kuwaiti infants in incubators created an aura of villainy. Every appearance of a defiant Hussein on TV added to the image that Hussein and Iraq existed solely for "a fight or other forms of struggle with the hero." The structure of the CNN video game required coherence despite the unstructured nature of real events—the subject position of the cast must be maintained at all costs. This was most clearly revealed at the moment of the Iraqi peace initiative. Bush called the overture a "cruel hoax" and dismissed it. For Hussein to have been interested in anything but murder would have upset the carefully balanced video game narrative. Reality in this case was identical to video games—the avatar is actually the mass murderer. For the narrative of war to run its course, America/Bush must murder. Estimates suggest that over a quarter of a million Iraqis died as a result of Operation Desert Storm. As in the video game, there were few casualties on the side of the *hero*, and most of those were due to "friendly fire" (player error). Bush forcefully asserted that there would be no negotiations; Iraq would leave Kuwait on his terms or else. The "Highway of Death" was actually the bombing of *retreating* Iraqi forces, who were returning as quickly as possible to Iraq to satisfy U.S. demands. Iraqis were killed because the narrative of war, which is the playing out of the subject positions, allowed no other options.

The ahistoricity of Gulf war coverage is also linked to its video game-like structure. A poll showed that people who watched TV coverage of the war knew far less about it than people who didn't. Very little explanation of the reasons for fighting the war rested on any historical basis. There was no way of addressed the manner in which the British had imposed boundaries and created nations in the Middle East. In TV parlance, the war

occurred because Hussein is the *villain* and the *hero* must go after the *villain* because that is what the *hero* does.

The schizophrenia of Gulf war coverage is an epistemological continuation of the schizophrenia of the video game. Note the euphoria of the American public during the war, which propelled Bush's approval rating to 90%, and the utter lack of support for Bush during his later Presidential reelection campaign. Without the schizophrenic moment of the war, his popularity sank. One doesn't remember the war, for like the video game, the structure is what is important and what is the same in later media events, later supersystems.

Like the video game, coverage of the war could be divided into two planes of existence, *background* and *foreground*. In the *foreground*, where all of the privileged action of the game happens, we can see the main characters of the narrative; Bush, Hussein, Baker, Aziz, etc. They are the ones who make decisions, slay the monsters, and generally propel the narrative forward. In the *background*, we can see despairing Kuwaitis, antiwar protesters (rarely), angry Iraqis waving fists and cursing the U.S., etc. None of these are more or less relevant, for none have any effect on the CNN narrative. They simply provide color and specificity to clothe the war and make it complete. The U.N., for example, was on the *background*, the insubstantial audience for the football game which was being played by George Bush. Of course, Hussein was silenced by the filtering apparatus of CNN, and only the words appropriate for a *villain* were allowed through to the American audience.

Television news coverage of the Gulf war largely followed the "great men of history" format which characterizes video games. The war was posited as a battle between George Bush and Saddam Hussein. This individualization of the conflict was necessary so that the subjectivities of the viewer could be collapsed with that of George Bush. The player/viewer is George Bush. In the CNN video game, the question is, "How do we get Kuwait away from Saddam?" Promotional spots claimed to put the viewer "in Baghdad, right in the action!" The trajectory is I/We-George Bush/America-UN vs. Them/Saddam Hussein/Iraq. The whole structure of the Persian Gulf war supersystem interpellates the viewer as the *hero*. The New Man is the arbiter of the New World Order.

Not only is there a conflation of the player's subjectivity, but that of the Other as well. If we can identify an I/We-Mario-America-UN-George Bush continuum, then we can also identify an Other-alien-monster-Iraq-Saddam Hussein continuum as well. The aliens in *Space Invaders* are functionally no different than the Arabs in *Persian Gulf Inferno* or the Iraqis in the Persian Gulf War. The focus on Hussein and his peculiarities by the TV coverage made him the "boss" *villain* at the end of the wargame. Hussein was often described as the twisted man, the insane man, the monstrous man. Often the link between the failure of SCUDs to hit their targets and Hussein's insanity was made during coverage: a "real man" would be able to shoot straight.

Because of the binary nature of the video game narrative, a division was produced between the viewer

and Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis. But because of the collapse of subjectivities on both sides of the binary, the real subaltern gets lumped in with Hussein in an Other-Iraq-Hussein continuum, as is evidenced in the rapid increase of hate crimes against Arab-Americans during the war. The news coverage produced a fictional subaltern in the form of Kuwait (which is both rich and powerful) with which the viewer can experience a sense of affinity. By presenting Kuwait as a small defenseless country which needed the world's help to stave off an overwhelmingly powerful and evil aggressor, Kuwaitis became a simulacra of the subaltern. The image of the subaltern was thus used to maintain the material subaltern's place on the bottom.

Princesses and Patriots

In the Gulf war, women functioned as an object of desire. There were the repeated images and interviews of military wives waiting for their husbands to return from the Gulf. There was a constant barrage of images of these women as sad, worried, and depressed that their soldier-husbands were gone and in danger. These images were cast against the interviews of soldiers in the Gulf who claimed they were fighting for their wives and children and wished to tell them that they missed them. Not only were these soldiers fighting for their wives, but for the Kuwaiti women who were allegedly being raped by Iraqi soldiers. The subject positions of the *hero* and the *princess* were constructed with each interview, cementing their relations. There were the many songs sung by female pop stars about the "heroes" of the Gulf war. Whitney Houston, for example, sang the "Star Spangled Banner" at the SuperBowl, appropriately dressed in a star-spangled jumpsuit. Houston was America and she needed saving.

Part of being a New Man involves feminizing the enemy:

Pilots aboard the aircraft carrier *USS John F. Kennedy* told an Associated Press reporter that they watched pornographic movies before their bombing missions, according to *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter Carol Morello. (Kellner: 198)

It comes as no surprise that many of the bombs dropped on Iraq carried scrawled messages such as "Bend over, Saddam." Chris Pierson quotes a *Newsweek* article describing the prostration of the enemy when victory had been secured:

Last week's television footage of Iraqi soldiers falling on their knees to kiss the hands of their U.S. Marine captors could be the defining visual for the war in the Persian Gulf. The video tape said it all: Saddam Hussein's humiliation, and the allies' triumph... It signified, as few war photos have ever done, qualities of national character that Americans like to think are unique to them: power and restraint, an easy confidence in the rightness of the American cause that is tempered by magnanimity in victory. (Pierson)

The image was so powerful because it fulfills the narrative of feminization and defines the Allied troops (and thus the viewers) as New Men.

At home, the press itself was feminized as it became one of the *villains*. Much of the hypermasculinization of coverage can be seen as a response to charges that the "liberal" media was responsible for the death of soldiers. Peter Arnett was excoriated for broadcasting live footage from Iraq and commenting about the mass murder which he witnessed. Censorship was justified as protecting "our troops."

ABC's crack Cokie Roberts got a deserved rebuke from Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf when she likened military footage of precision bombing to video games on *This Week With David Brinkley*, where the round-table talk seemed for distressingly jovial than usual. ("Commentary...")

The patronizing tone which is evident in this statement was commonly used against those who were even remotely critical or questioning of the war.

Hardware as Hero

Part of the connection between video games and the Gulf War can be attributed to the widespread technofetishism exhibited in the media. The creation of "pools" for reporters in the Gulf meant severely limited access to possible stories and heavy dependence on spoon-fed "news" which the military decided was fit for public consumption. The tendency to glamorize technology was exacerbated by the content of officially released news, primarily specs, pictures and footage of the main armaments used in the war. Many articles appeared which were simply descriptions of the latest war tech and diagrams of how it worked. The accompanying "gee whiz" tone of the articles made them less news and more advertisement for major weapons manufacturers:

America's awesome high-tech air arsenal is working over Iraq with the flash, speed and precision of a video game, and it has transformed the way future wars will be waged, military experts said Thursday. (Dart)

The President himself was impressed by the video game-like technology:

"Geez, look at that," President Bush reportedly exclaimed when he viewed a videotape showing a precision bombing attack by a F-117A Stealth fighter-bomber on the Iraqi Air Force headquarters in Baghdad. (Leroux, Charles)

In the discussion of hardware video games functioned to signify how easy victory had become due to the new technology. Victory was easy, and it was also entertainment for the viewers at home:

"It's fantastic—well, no, it's not," says Bay Shore audio engineer Jim Jordan, catching himself swept up in aesthetic admiration of what he knows was a lethal attack. "They drop the bomb from the plane, and you can watch it as it's going down and one guy actually steers the bomb. They sent one missile around and

through the front door, and another one down the air shaft. Do you remember in the first Star Wars movie, where Luke Skywalker has to aim the thing down an air shaft? It's just like that. It's like a video game." (Werts)

Pat Jeffries points out that truly the "stars" of the Gulf War were not George Bush and Saddam Hussein, but the Patriot missile and:

An emerging star of what has been called "video game" weaponry is the sea-launched Tomahawk cruise missile, a 550-m.p.h. rocket guided by radar and a TV camera that scan the ground and compare the terrain and the target with maps stored in the missile's computer. (Leroux, Charles)

Cyborgs and mutants don't worry about consequences. Technology was the only "hero" in the Gulf War, not individual men. Everyone knows that muscles don't win wars, missiles do. (Jeffries. [It is notable that Jeffries is Canadian, and it is in the Canadian and British press that the most critical articles appeared.])

It's not that previous wars didn't have much hardware, but it hadn't been so spectacular, so central, so much like a video game.

The war was ultimately, but not solely, a gigantic commercial for weapons of war, including the (in)famous Patriot missile. During the war, the efficacy of the Patriot missile was rated at ninety percent. After the dust had settled, it was discovered that far less missiles actually hit their targets. But the coverage of the war had used the ideology of the upgrade effectively, quick to catch on to the way technology is fetishized in video games. Patriot missiles were coded as empowering America. But as in the video game, empowerment simply means an extension of the game itself—Patriot missiles only have relevance in the context of war. Empowering America means empowering George Bush which means empowering the individual whose subjectivity has been conflated into that continuum. This conflation was most visible when George Bush made a personal appearance at the plant where the missiles were made. The HTPMC who work for the makers of the Patriot missile then became heroes too. The coverage of the war reinforced the notion that technology in the shape of weapons is empowering. This notion, in turn, generates the HTPMC's desire to spend more on defense—as in the video game, defense of the nation-state is inexorably tied to consumption.

Money

The TV coverage provided the immediate means to be a *hero*: i.e., do nothing. The discourse of "support the troops" was defined as not protesting the war. Dissent had long been portrayed by the Right as a cause of soldiers' deaths in the Viet Nam war, so the link was already made between protest and American casualties. In this construction, one could best assist the avatar by doing nothing that could be interpreted as anti-soldier, and any activity that involved dissent was constituted as anti-soldier and thus, anti-*hero*. Of course, one of the best ways of doing nothing is to sit around and watch war

coverage on CNN. Since the networks are businesses, it was in their interest to have people doing nothing in front of their televisions, boosting ratings and profits. The Persian Gulf supersystem was profitable for both the administration and for businesses of all kinds.

The financial sector, especially the toy industry, was particularly concerned with video games during the Gulf War. Stocks and bonds were being traded frantically as the news of events in Iraq was assimilated into traders' strategies.

Video games are as close as most Tokyo share traders get to hands-on military experience, so investment tactics for the Gulf War are proving a challenge. (Laroi)

"This, after all, is a war, not a video game," said Paul Migliorato, a broker at Jardine Fleming Securities. (Sieg)

The authors of articles about the market were blind to the irony of Migliorato's statement—traders spend their days in a room full of flashing displays and televisions, gambling virtual money on commodities that, like the war, they will never personally see.

While the game of making industry moved through its motions, the industry of making games was dealing with its own problems. The combination of a recession, the Gulf War, and the emerging dominance of video games as the toy of choice was hurting the sales of other kinds of toys. A common tactic was to capitalize on the war as much as public opinion would allow:

David Miller, president of the TMA, said toys related to the Persian Gulf war were enjoying an increase in popularity, but that the public would reject those that were in bad taste. (Hurdle)

Some companies, however, were taking advantage of the war:

In a more recent example of courting the entertainment community, a military contractor has turned to a tiny California computer game company as a potential source of software to simulate F-16 flight.

The company, Spectrum Holobyte, has a \$69.95 Falcon video game that caught the eye of a retired fighter pilot now working for a Pentagon contractor. The company and contractor have teamed up to build training simulators they hope to sell to the military for \$300,000 apiece. (Richards)

The Persian Gulf war was one of the largest supersystems in recent history. It fits all the requirements that Kinder outlines in her definition: it crosses "several modes of image production" in movies, TV, t-shirts, video games, etc.; it appeals to "diverse generations, classes, and ethnic subcultures" through mechanisms like Colin Powell and the debate over the inclusion of women in combat; it fostered "collectability through a proliferation of related products" such as yellow ribbons, memorial coins, and other "unique items, and it underwent "a sudden increase in commodification, the success of which reflexively [became] a 'media event' that dramati-

cally [accelerated] the growth of the system's commercial success."

Because the coverage of the war is so similar across wars—a similarity in structure—there will (like the video game) always be a sequel. There need not be an official Persian Gulf War II or WWII, another conflict will suffice. The macro narrative of capitalism and the supersystem guarantee an endless supply of evil dictators to be defeated (Grenada-Panama-Iraq-Somalia-Haiti-?). Like the video game, there is a *villain* at the very end of the game, and because the game keeps changing, so do the *villains*. There is always a steady industry producing films, TV, news, T-shirts, and yellow ribbons to capitalize on the next big theme which unites another supersystem formation. After the Major Climax, which is a war, the push of capital will simply return to another supersystem, whether it's focus is an overseas dictator or a cult leader in Texas.

Conclusion

The narrative structure of video games and the fetishization of technology can be identified at three interlocking levels which together compose a frightening manifestation of the supersystem. The first level is the game structure—the way in which the narratives of the game are formed and the manner in which they function. The second is the level of the everyday life of the high-tech worker—on this level we see how elements of video game narrative structure are incorporated into daily practices, which include technofetishism, schizophrenia, and the exploitation of women's bodies. The third level is that of the geopolitical macro-narrative, the narrative of the nationstate and transnational capital; on this level we can see the way in which these video game paradigms mobilize populations and build consensus for war through their expression in mass media texts.

The paradigm of the video game, whose roots lie in the fairy tale, are prevalent in the supersystem structure of late capitalist economies. Marsha Kinder refers to the roots of this problem: "According to Papert, one of the 'fundamental fact[s] about learning' is that 'anything is easy if you can assimilate it to your collection of models. If you can't, anything can be *painfully* difficult.'" (Kinder: 150, my italics) The wholesale support of the Persian Gulf war was built on the fundamental model of fairy tale and video game structure—this was the easiest paradigm with which the public could understand the war. The system works because it is far easier to rely on old models of narrative building than to establish new ones, especially when new models could mean loss of profits for those who risk a change. The net effect of video games in the Persian Gulf war is startlingly similar to that characterized by Robert Kirk in his analysis of children's participation in WWII:

This study calls attention to several other facts. Children performed valuable services for the war effort; propaganda reinforced racial prejudice and patriotism; children came to perceive waging war as a viable alternative for solving international problems; playing

war games reinforced girls' ascribed ancillary roles, and growing up in wartime contributed to the formation of the so-called "silent" generation of the 1950s. (Dissertation Abstracts, Kirk)

War begins at home.

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UNCOVERING THE DEATHWISH: Absurdism in *Dr. Strangelove*

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The 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove* carried triple credits to Stanley Kubrick, Terry Southern, and Peter George although the novel was published that same year under the latter's name only. The attribution of the movie was the more accurate of the two because it appropriately reflected how methods of black humor had been superimposed onto the realist base of Peter George's 1958 novel *Two Hours to Doom* (U.S. title, *Red Alert*), Kubrick's "adaptation" of this novel involved a fundamental shift in narrative mode so that, rather than dramatize a crisis within the Cold War, he could direct a comic assault on an entire political stance. George's novel then point for point supplied Kubrick with materials for parody or travesty.

Two Hours carried a brief foreword explaining that it described events which could easily happen and more importantly that it presented a battle on two fronts: military combat and one "in the minds of men." The events are triggered when the commander of a Strategic Air Command (SAC) base orders a "red alert," i.e., a state of maximum readiness to respond to Russian attack, and dispatches his bombers in retaliation to a non-existent offensive, thus over-riding the "fail-safe" system.¹ George explores the possibility of such action and secondly examines the reasons behind it. Accordingly it is crucially important that General Quinten should not emerge as the grotesque paranoid depicted in *Dr. Strangelove*. As the American president points out, Quinten is a typical casualty of the Cold War, pushed to the brink of nervous collapse by the permanent state of tension between the superpowers, and in that respect he anticipates the officer who accidentally fires missiles from an American destroyer, thereby precipitating the nuclear climax to Mark Rascovich's *The Bedford Incident* (1963). Furthermore, he articulates a distrust of politicians which spreads throughout the higher ranks of the military establishment.²

Quinten is in fact a Christian and paradoxically launches his bombers to bring about "peace on earth," one of his cherished slogans; an even more pointed irony is set up by the recurrence of the SAC slogan "Peace Is Our Profession" throughout *Dr. Strangelove*. Taking upon himself the prerogative to play destiny, Quinten plans to break through the current superpower impasse and create a new world order. This apocalyptic purpose is justified in two lengthy discussions he holds with his deputy officer where he forces the latter to survey world events since 1945 as a history of Communist conspiracy. Where Russia is presented as a single-minded aggressor, the United States is criticized for blindness, hesitation and a failure to inspire any ideological counter to Communism. Quinten's argument, which his deputy finds "utterly convincing," for Merrit Abrash "does not run

counter to deterrence but follows channels marked out by the logic of that policy."³ Its very rationality becomes part of its force. Quinten simply reverses the U.S.A.'s stated refusal to initiate a first strike in order to secure ultimate peace. Being well-read as well as eloquent, he backs up his account with an analogy drawn from Kipling's *Jungle Book* story "Rikki-Tikki-Tavi" about the mongoose killing the cobra's eggs. He glosses this as a parable of decisive action: "He doesn't have to ask for proof—his instinct tells him a mongoose doesn't live with a snake. He kills the snakes, or the snakes kill him. So, he acts, and he lives."⁴ The progressive simplification of the syntax reduces the issue to stark alternatives, but the parable carries an equally weighted meta-message that Communists belong to an alien threatening species and that right action can be dictated by the instinct for survival. These hidden assumptions are never addressed by the novel.

The foreword to *Two Hours to Doom*, like other narratives of nuclear accident, stresses the accelerated pace of events which only cover a two-hour span, and chapters consist for the most part of five or ten-minute blocks headed by the equivalent G.M.T., Washington or Moscow time. The novel, however, never achieves the sophistication of Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler's *Fail-Safe* (1962) in its handling of time in a comparable crisis between the superpowers. George crudely exploits cliff-hanging chapter endings to whip up suspense, closing off the narrative just where a character is beginning to speak or just when a crucial event is on the verge of happening. The action moves towards an Armageddon which might be triggered by a multiple cobalt bomb—what will be called in *Dr. Strangelove*, after Herman Kahn, the "Doomsday Machine." It is the Russian ambassador who melodramatically points out this crisis: "Not just two hours to bomb time. But two hours to doom."⁵ In fact, the novel draws back from total destruction and then sets up a series of diminishing crises as a tit-for-tat bombing of one city is agreed, but then even that proves unnecessary. The cinematic image of the "familiar mushroom cloud" is a suppressed presence in the narrative which attempts to maintain a known and familiar scale to events by constantly drawing comparisons with World War II. This is yet another strategy which will be undermined in *Dr. Strangelove*.

Two Hours to Doom anticipates *Fail-Safe*, although on a much smaller scale, and repeats the film *Strategic Air Command* (1955) in allowing its narrative to grow out of brief expositions of the U.S. defense system like the following:

At a hundred listening posts throughout the free world, in hot climates and in cold, out of scorching desert and arctic tundra, the slender radio masts lift their receiving aerials high into the air. These are the stations which maintain a guardian watch, picking up signals from airborne bombers, and sometimes signals from the ground to those bombers. They are the junction points of the invisible spider's web of radio. They cover the whole of the northern hemisphere and ninety per cent of the southern. They never sleep.⁶

There is no reservation at all about this passage's celebration of military technology. The connection between radio masts and bombers is presented as a miracle of collaboration articulated through an animating metaphor which suggests as once harmony, vigilance, and a posture of defense. Again and again the descriptive present gives way to the narrative past as if to remind the reader how easily these events might take place. And this transition even applies to the opening section which takes the crew of the Alabama Angel out of a repeated routine flight into the sequence they have all been dreading. The bomber crew is carefully assembled out of a range of regional and ethnic types who are humanized by their incomplete attempts to block out of their consciousness memories of the past or thoughts of their families. They are the professionals of the novel, idealized case studies in discipline and resourcefulness, and ultimately the ironic victims of Quinten's obsession.

When Kubrick started work on the screenplay for *Dr. Strangelove* his original intention was to produce a serious adaptation of George's novel. Then, by his own account, he ran up against a difficulty: "I found that in trying to put meat on the bones and to imagine the scenes fully one had to keep leaving things out of it which were either absurd or paradoxical, in order to keep it from being funny, and these things seemed to be very real."⁷ This blocked his true sense of a scenario: "After all, what could be more absurd than the very idea of two megapowers willing to wipe out all human life because of an accident, spiced up by political differences that will seem as meaningless to people a hundred years from now as the theological conflicts of the Middle Ages appear to us today?"⁸ Accordingly he chose a method of "nightmare comedy" as being most appropriate to the subject.

One result of this comedy is, as we shall see, to estrange the reader, and a difference from *Two Hours* immediately presents itself. George introduces his narrative with a brief foreword which stresses the plausibility of the events to be recounted. Where he insists on the possible immediacy of his narrative, *Dr. Strangelove* pushes the convention of future history so far forward that its introductory frame virtually classifies the narrative as science fiction. Just as Kurt Vonnegut uses the planet Tralfamadore to set up a remote, external and therefore critical perspective on events on Earth in *Slaughterhouse 5*, so an editorial note in the novel *Dr. Strangelove* (published in 1963 as a movie tie-in) establishes the convention of the found manuscript and also a huge unspecified chronological gap between the date of events and the date of the narrative frame. This alienating device prevents the reader from accepting anything with the narrative as "natural" and places us at an ironic remove from the Cold War. The anonymous narrator expresses bewilderment over the hostility between East and West: "They were not on friendly terms, and we find this difficult to understand, because both were governed by power systems which seem to us basically similar."⁹ This description estranges us equally from both sides, inviting the reader to identify with the we-group referred to in the introduction. A similar alienating rhetoric is used in Albert Bermel's 1964 story "The End of the Race,"

which opens: "At that time the nations known as America and Russia had set off 2,500 nuclear explosions, pulverized every small island in the Pacific, Arctic and Indian Oceans, blown out of the earth lumps of great magnitude and little mineralogical value, and saturated the enclosing atmosphere and stratosphere with new elements, from Strontium-90 to Neptunium-237."¹⁰ The story's title puns on human extinction and the culmination to the arms race which is described as a futile, self-mystifying process of wanton destruction. As in *Dr. Strange-love*, Bermel prevents the reader from identifying with either national group by exploiting a notional future point from which these activities will seem absurd.

Kubrick brought Terry Southern in to work on the script and the film subsequently appeared with credits to both as well as to George, although it has been argued on the basis of its style that the novel *Dr. Strangelove* was entirely the work of Southern, despite being published under George's name.¹¹ By 1962-1963, Southern had to his credit three novels: *Flash and Filigree* (1958), *The Magic Christian* (1959) and *Candy* (published in Paris 1958, U.S.A. 1964). Peter Sellers liked *The Magic Christian* so much that he bought the movie rights and he might have had the original idea of bringing in Southern. Whatever the particular circumstances, the film and novel have been repeatedly linked by critics with the black humor of the sixties. Bruce Jay Friedman's 1965 anthology *Black Humor* included a piece by Southern and in his introduction Friedman characterized the new mode as exploiting a blurred border between fantasy and reality and possessing a "nervousness, a tempo, a near-hysterical new beat."¹² The critic Max Schulz unduly narrowed his survey of the mode by trying to concentrate too much awareness into the protagonist who was, he argued, "at once observer of, and participant in, the drama of dissidence detached from and yet affected by what happens about him."¹³ "dissidence," however, strikes a useful note in this context because the new comedy trespassed on previously taboo areas, creating humor out of death (*Catch-22*), sex (*Candy*), and in the case of *Dr. Strangelove*, the fear of nuclear holocaust.

Where Burdick and Wheeler's *Fail-Safe* draws on the pattern of Greek tragedy for its action, *Dr. Strangelove* at once magnifies the human cost of accident and depicts the action as comic, partly to emphasize the helplessness of the human agents. George W. Linden has written that the "plot of the film is the accelerating technological inevitability of modern society, an acceleration that has as its products social stupidity and ultimate political impotence."¹⁴ One sign of this impotence is the discontinuity within the action where cross-cutting between scenes only emphasizes that communication has been lost. The three main settings are interiors, by implication sealed against an outside world of rationality; the most obvious case being General Ripper's office with its shuttered windows. Again in keeping with black comedy fiction, continuity of the plot temporarily disappears. One hallmark of Terry Southern's novels is that local episodes sketch out an initial situation which is then brought to a peak of disorder, and this same pattern recurs in *Dr. Strangelove*. As the crisis mounts, the President is

blocked from entering the War Room by an overzealous guard who insists on seeing his pass even though he recognizes him. The farce is only resolved when secret service officers overcome the guards in a "fracas." Since the whole action of *Dr. Strangelove* concerns the workings of a procedure beyond the limits of human control this particular scene makes a facetious comment on such limits. Similarly violence breaks out between the Russian ambassador and General Turgidson within the War Room's already "highly explosive" atmosphere when the former is caught taking photographs through a spy camera. Both scenes revolve around a comedy of diminution, here superpower confrontation being reduced to an undignified brawl. The slapstick element originally resulted in a "free-for-all fight with custard pies" between the ambassador and the rest in the War Room but Kubrick cut this out for the following reason: "I decided it was farce and not consistent with the satiric tone of the rest of the film."

Discontinuity performs a function in *Dr. Strangelove* similar to that of *Catch-22* in making it impossible to view the American military as a collective entity. The innovation on *Two Hours* of introducing a displaced RAF officer as General Ripper's deputy immediately sets up a disparity of idiom and style between the two officers. This repeats itself in the relief of Burpelson Base when Colonel Bat Guano bursts in on Mandrake mumbling to himself: "Guano was becoming convinced now that the was facing a lunatic. Besides, he was suspicious of Mandrake's strange uniform and long hair. Perverts let their hair grow long, he knew. They liked to dress up in fancy clothes, too."¹⁵ Like General Ripper, he identifies the unknown with the alien and therefore with potential threat. Briefly Mandrake becomes another Yossarian (chosen by Heller precisely to be an outsider and a misfit). In the passage just quoted Guano focalizes the scene but the narrative voice remains studiously deadpan, another hallmark of Terry Southern's writings. His sketch "The Moonshot Scandal" (collected in *Red Dirt Marijuana*), for instance, describes the launch of the spaceship in pseudo-reportorial style and then introduces more and more ludicrous matters of "fact" (one of the crew might have been a woman, a Control Room officer reduced the scene to chaos by dancing around in feminine dress, etc.). The Swiftian facade of solemnity masks an impulse to disrupt an occasion of public reverence for technology. In the novel *Dr. Strangelove* several chapters begin in a comparable documentary style of factual exposition which sets up a register against which the spoken idioms of the characters can play to ironic effect.

Another consequence of the isolation of scenes is their incongruous relation to the context of crisis. Kubrick has pointed this out as a central effect: "Most of the humor in *Strangelove* arises from the depiction of everyday human behavior in a nightmarish situation."¹⁶ Whereas in *Two Hours* and *Fail-Safe* the hot line performs an important function in bringing the leaders of the superpowers together, one of the many ironies of *Dr. Strangelove* is that the military machines function only too well, whereas the means of communication constantly break down.¹⁷ The comic business of Mandrake

running out of coins when he tries to phone in the recall code is one example. Another is the conversations between the President and the Russian premier. Kubrick allowed Peter Sellers to improvise a number of scenes in the movie, one probably being where the President first speaks to Premier Kissef.¹⁸ This masterpiece of repetition draws out polite banality to a ridiculous extreme as the critical moments tick by: "Listen, I can't hear too well. Do you suppose you could turn the music down just a little. Ah ha, that's much better... yes, fine. I can hear you now, Dimitri, clear and plain and coming through fine... I'm coming through fine too, eh? Good, then... Well then, as you say, we're both coming through fine... Well, it's good that you're fine and I'm fine. It's great to be fine, ha-ha-ha." [Transcribed from film.] As in Bob Newhart's monologues from the same period, some humor comes from the implied responses of the second speaker, but even more from the resemblance to a phone call between two friends, and more still from the bland repetition of "fine" when a technical state of war exists between the two countries. Again and again speech breaks down before the enormity of the events themselves. After the Doomsday Machine goes off the different members of the War Room speak aloud rather than to each other; "It's wrong," "It's not right," "It isn't right," and so on.¹⁹ Cliché and banality reflect not only a limit to verbal expression but also the inability of the authorities to conceive of their own war machine in action. The War Room, a key setting in both film and novel, reinforces our sense of their inadequacy as the huge displays dwarf the human figures. The place resembles nothing more than an immense poker table and this analogy makes an implicit (and again ironic) comment on those grouped round it. Once the news of the crisis breaks the President goes round some of the members, asking them to "bid" an opinion. Some "see" his suggestion, another passes, and all the time the hypotheses which we encounter in other narratives of nuclear disaster are reduced to a game of chance.

The scenic method of *Dr. Strangelove* establishes a series of alternations between key settings which underlines the lack of communication between them. Although Kubrick felt that *Two Hours to Doom* was a "very good suspense novel," he did not use alternation only for such an end.²⁰ There is an accelerating montage of shorter scenic units as *Leper Colony* approaches its target, but more is involved than establishing suspense. While time is referred to constantly, countdowns of different kinds recur in the action. More importantly, there is a striking structural difference between the novel and the film which confirms that the former was no mere routine adaptation. The novel contains approximately twice the number of scenes as the film, which are cleverly juxtaposed to bring out the main theses. In the novel, sections 5-10 run as follows:

- 5 Burpelson Base is sealed. Ripper delivers a pep talk.
6. Kong itemizes the survival kits in *Leper Colony*.
7. The President enters the War Room with difficulty.
8. The news is announced in the War Room.

9. The crew of *Leper Colony* check their equipment.
 10. Mandrake realizes Ripper is mad.

Scene 5 concludes and Scene 10 opens with Mandrake entering Ripper's office. This action is carefully repeated to suggest simultaneity between the embedded scenes which the reader is invited to consider in juxtaposition to each other. Juxtaposition in turn suggests similarity: the crew of the *Leper Colony* seal off their aircraft against enemy radio traffic; the War Room also might be just as sealed off as Burpelson. Similarly, when Kong is trying to free the bomb doors of *Leper Colony*, the sexual connotations of the action are brought out more clearly by Miss Foreign Affairs phoning Turgidson twice to make sure their relationship is not just physical. High and low drama alternate; the lack of communication is stressed; and the disruption to the mounting suspense blocks the reader from a simple involvement in the action's suspense.

The preamble to the movie explains that a single bomber's load is "about equivalent to fifteen times the amount of explosives dropped during World War Two." Such comparisons recur throughout the novels, essays and films of the period dealing with nuclear weapons to introduce an analogy between the active combat of the past and the latent combat of the present. In the 1955 film *Strategic Air Command* one character declares proudly: "With the new family of nuclear weapons one B-47 and a crew of three carries the destructive force of the entire B-29 force we used against Japan." Such a crude celebration of size and technical efficiency is mimicked in the opening lines of the narrative proper of *Dr. Strangelove* and then undermined with increasing irony. *Strategic Air Command* and *Two Hours to Doom* use connections with World War II in order to draw audience and reader into a collective group continuously under threat. Both works capitalize on the films and novelistic memoirs of the war which were published or reissued during the Fifties. Works like Guy Gibson's *Enemy Coast Ahead* (1946) set up a tension between home base (the command center) and the heroism, versatility and ultimate isolation of the bombers in coping with enemy action. In George's novel there are many echoes of such narratives in the references to hostile territory, for instance, and explicit comparisons with enemy flak. These connections familiarize the action for the reader despite Quinten's declaration that anything is possible in the new era of thermonuclear war.

Dr. Strangelove rejects such analogies with World War II by presenting them as absurd anachronisms. The first instance of this process is "King" Kong's statement to his crew, in spite of objections, that they are entering a phase of combat "toe-to-toe with the Russkies." Where Kong hopes to continue a family line of soldiering the technical facts of the new situation exclude just the sort of physical confrontation he is relishing. Again the itemized survival kit ridiculously suggests possibilities of contact with enemy nationals when the very idea of survival is being brought into question. The flight of *Leper Colony* then resembles a displaced bombing mission without a supporting context and the narrative simulta-

neously invites recognition of stereotyped expressions and characters from war movies or fiction, and at the same time renders those stereotypes doubly absurd by their incongruity. Charles Maland rightly notes that Kong's pep talk to his crew (excluded from the novel) is a staple scene in World War II movies and exactly the same point could be made about Ripper's address to the men on his base.²¹ He concludes his telephone message to SAC HQ in ringing Churchillian tones which collapse bathetically into psychosis: "God willing we shall prevail in peace and freedom from fear and in true health through the purity and essence of our natural fluids."²² The fact that Ripper lights up a cigar after he seals his base only confirms the Churchillian role he is adopting as the director of national destiny, but the lofty abstractions in the lines just quoted are unconsciously deflated by Ripper's physical obsessions.

Group Captain Mandrake has a crucial role to play in the possible analogies with World War II and represents another major innovation on Kubrick's part since he can play off their styles against each other. Where Mandrake is an immaculate and correct master of understatement, Ripper is flamboyantly gung-ho; the former acts as the perfect foil to the latter's paranoia. Partly an ineffectual voice of sanity, Mandrake is also associated with patriotic images of war. When a prisoner of war, he was involved in building railway lines for "Japanese puff-puffs," a detail which could hardly fail to be linked to the 1957 movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. Defined entirely by his accustomed official procedures, once Mandrake realizes what has happened, in the film he comes to attention and adopts an especially pompous tone of voice to announce the recall of the wing. But the whole point of the film and novel is that such procedures go wrong. Mandrake's presumption of order makes him into a surrogate reader/spectator at times and it is an important detail that he is the only character who laughs, however nervously. Part of Ripper's "evidence" for the international Communist conspiracy is the World War II slogan, "Joe for King," and Mandrake in vain tries to point out that it was a joke. Ultimately, the bizarre possibility emerges that the whole world might have been destroyed because one officer lacked a sense of humor.

As we have seen, one of the principles operating throughout *Dr. Strangelove* is discontinuity, whether within or between scenes, and this further erodes the analogies with earlier wars. The disparity between events and their stylistic rendering suggests that there are no fixed points of bearing because nuclear holocaust has no precedent. Thus it is appropriate for the film to end with nuclear explosions over which Vera Lynn sings "We'll Meet Again." The contradiction between soundtrack and image (a nuclear "sunset" is synchronized with the words "some sunny day") makes a fitting coda to a motif running right through the narrative which has denied any conceivable resemblance between nuclear war and any earlier kind of warfare. The present, in other words, cannot be read as a logical outcome of the past. It should be obvious from the foregoing that *Dr. Strangelove* possesses many similarities with *Catch-22*. As in that novel, the notion of "enemy" is revised as American becomes pitted

against American. The glamour of patriotic action is repeatedly ridiculed, and there are a number of points where potential logical spirals are introduced like *Catch-22* itself; for instance, when one soldier asks how they know those attacking Burpelson Base are "saboteurs" he is answered by the counter-question, "How do you know they're not?"²³ As in Heller's novel such circularity insulates those in authority from rational scrutiny. *Catch-22* is peopled with paranoids who find conspiracies everywhere and who personify different aspects of McCarthyism, like Captain Black who mounts a Glorious Loyalty Oath Crusade or General Dreedle, who finds Yossarian's name alien, therefore subversive. General Ripper similarly finds "evidence" for his conspiracy theory in 1946 marking both the beginning of a fluoridation campaign and of the Cold War. Combining a double suspicion of welfare programs and of Communism, his words repeat the essential oppositions of McCarthyite rhetoric: "A foreign substance is introduced into the precious bodily fluids, without the knowledge of the individual and certainly without any free choice. That's the way the comics work..."²⁴ The alien is pitted against the familiar, the unknown against the known and national health strategy becomes recoded as a subversion of the body. The transposition of political subversion onto the body is a tactic common to *Catch-22* and it is likely that Heller's novel offered Kubrick a model for burlesquing the McCarthy era, since on July 30, 1962 Kubrick wrote to Heller inviting him to draft a screenplay for *Dr. Strangelove*.²⁵ Heller declined, but the very fact of the invitation suggests an analogy between the comic treatment of combat in both works.

The comedy of both *Catch-22* and *Dr. Strangelove* is directed against institutional solemnity, and in the latter is underpinned by many references to sexuality. This was first recognized by F. Anthony Macklin who earned Kubrick's approval by describing the film as a "sex allegory," "from foreplay to explosion in the mechanized world."²⁶ Macklin argues that this sequence can be observed particularly clearly in the flight of *Leper Colony* as its commander "King" Kong progresses from "reading" *Playboy* through arming the bombs (which then become "potent") and preliminary combat to the orgasmic launch of the bombs, one of which is ridden by Kong to his death. Norman Kagan has further fleshed out this reading, adding more glosses on characters' names and pointing out that the B-52 bomber is itself "phallic, particularly in its indefatigable race to coitus."²⁷

The novel and film both use sexual innuendo to suggest that the American military machine is being fed by a distorted sexual impulse—hence the appropriateness of the title—which has diverted Eros onto Thanatos. To establish this theme, *Dr. Strangelove* makes a travesty of a motif which occurs in *Strategic Air Command*, namely the attribution of femininity to a military technology which has to be controlled and operated by men. The most dramatic moment in the earlier film occurs not when "Dutch" Holland's baby is born, but when he is taken into a hangar to see a prototype bomber. He gasps: "She's the most beautiful thing that I've seen in my life." The language of the family is transposed into a military

context to suggest that the family unit must take second place to the larger entity of the military, which represents the nation itself.²⁸

Dr. Strangelove takes over such discourse and foregrounds sexuality from the first scenes. The film opens with a sequence of a bomber refueling in mid-air, taken straight from *Strategic Air Command* but wrenched out of context so that it resembles two gigantic metal insects copulating in mid-air. The novel is slower to establish the theme but it is just as marked. Indeed, a significant revision of the film is that one of the bombs is named Lolita. In both versions, the centerfold figure from *Playboy* is Miss Foreign Affairs who later appears as General Buck Turgidson's secretary, sprawled under a sun lamp. This scene echoes the movie *Lolita* and clearly uses throwaway visual details like the fact that she is wearing a bikini, named after Bikini Atoll, the location of the A-bomb tests. While Kong is contemplating the earlier image he reflects complacently on his own good taste in women ("prime cut and double grade-A premium") in terms which encode them as items of food. To take a slightly different example, the scene between Turgidson and his secretary concludes with him telling her: "you can start your count down right now and old Buckie will be back before you can say re-entry."²⁹ The concluding ribald pun (the film uses the more decorous "blast-off") confirms an analogy between sexual activity and the operation of weaponry. In short, the puns, innuendoes and metaphors which recur throughout *Dr. Strangelove* establish an intricate series of connections between scenes and figures which focus on three interlocking areas: sex, food and military hardware. Casual colloquialisms like "shoot" (Kong's exclamation) or "blast" (i.e., telephone call: Turgidson's term) cannot be read in innocence because the novel and film repeat them in different contexts. In case we miss the pun on Miss Foreign Affairs, the Russian ambassador stresses that his premier is also a man of "affairs." Thomas Nelson is the only critic to date who has spotted the "primal importance" Kubrick gives to food and eating, but he fails to point out how consumption meshes with sex, consumerism (the assault on the Coke machine, etc.) and even technology (since the bomber "drinks" fuel).³⁰

The attention to double-entendre and the metaphors of slang all come to bear on one recurring target, the macho postures of the military hawks. The rather solemn commentary which some critics have made on characters' names understates their absurdity. Kong casts himself as a latter-day warrior, a new "top gun," drawing his roles from Westerns; but his name recasts him as an ape. Similarly, Turgidson's name renders his aggressive posture absurd and several scenes suggest that the only thing swollen is his rhetoric. Such names then become comic labels which operate at their wearer's expense. They function collectively as an alienation device which incidentally burlesques the convention of nicknames in war narratives. Macklin lapses into solemnity and sexism when he explains that Merkin Muffley's name shows the "femininity of the President, illustrated by his lack of action," when the most obvious ribald significance is the ironic contrast between the slang

connotations of pubic hair and the President's baldness.³¹ One of the main targets of black humor was the decorum of realism and these labels, like the blatant bad joke of Jack D. Ripper's name, undermine the potential solemnity of the subject and perform the verbal equivalent of the fights noted earlier. In *The Magic Christian* the billionaire protagonist Guy Grand takes a delight in inserting scenes into films which make criminal or sexual connotations unmistakable, and a similar process occurs in *Dr. Strangelove*. The allusions to *Strategic Air Command* and casual gender terms in war narratives (like referring to the bomber as "she") are now pushed to an extreme where the sexual connotations of language almost take over as a subject in their own right.

Almost, but not quite. The comedy of *Dr. Strangelove* is, after all, a comedy ultimately about death, and destruction turns out to be the true aphrodisiac. When the bombers head for the Soviet Union, Dr. Strangelove's eyes gleam with excitement and Turgidson becomes "almost feverish." Similarly, the sexual mime of Kong forcing open the bomb doors leads directly to his own annihilation. General Ripper functions in the narrative not only as a trigger to the action but as a particular instance of a general pathology. *Dr. Strangelove* clearly draws on Freud's theory of the deathwish here, since the impulse to dissolve living units and "bring them back to their primeval, inorganic state" finds most literal demonstration in Kong dissolving into raw matter. Freud declares that "man's natural aggressive instinct... is the derivative, and the main representative of the death instinct which we have found alongside of Eros and which shares world-dominion with it."³² At the time when Kubrick and Southern were working on the film script an article appeared in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (to which Kubrick had a regular subscription) that applied Freud's theory to contemporary warfare. Mortimer Ostow speculated on the unconscious motives behind war, suggesting that the death instinct might be subject to "discharge pressure" like Eros, and he continued: "In the case of some of the more aggressive and bold leaders of the past, it is likely that their belligerence served to deflect their inward directed death impulses to the outer world."³³

General Ripper rationalizes a fear of ejaculation as a triple conspiracy by women, crypto-Communists in the American administration, and the Soviet Union to rob him of his "essence." Self-defense inverts into preemptive attack and projects his sexual fears onto the world scene. In that respect he offers a case study of the death instinct determining military conduct and the novel's subtext repeatedly hints at the sexual motives to his action. Once he seals off his base he lights up a cigar, a celebratory act and also a metaphorical hint that the sexual tempo is rising. Cigar leads into pistol and machine-gun as a mini-sequence of phallic symbols which build up to an orgasmic climax when he fires the latter out of his office window. Once his men surrender, however, post-coital gloom descends on him. His cigar goes "dead," his eyes glaze over "almost dead," and he seems to age unnaturally. Peter George naturalized Quinten's impending death as an incurable disease and the last time we see

him he is sorting out his last formalities. In the film of *Dr. Strangelove* however, Ripper walks toward his bathroom while Mandrake carries on an absurd monologue of cliché phrases ("wash and brush up," "water on the back of the neck," etc.) which halt abruptly with the sound of a shot. The novel, again in contrast, makes greater play of the weapon he is carrying: "Ripper began to walk slowly across the office, the empty bullet cases clinking as his dragging feet moved through them. He was trailing the machine gun in his left hand."³⁴ Verbal description selects and therefore highlights details which would otherwise merge into a whole visual scene in the cinema and thereby suggests that Ripper's fears of emptiness have been realized. In a sense it is more appropriate for him to simply exit from the scene rather than shoot himself as he does in the film because metaphorically he is already dead. The recurrence of conspiratorial rhetoric and the cigar-motif beyond Ripper prevents us from taking his obsessions as a matter of only individual pathology and extends them into a collective political mentality.

If Ripper represents the pathological extreme of this mentality, *Dr. Strangelove* expresses its scientific facade. His very name defines a central theme of the narrative, one which is sardonically reinforced by its subtitle travesty of the physicist Leo Szilard's article, "How to Live with the Bomb and Survive."³⁵ The film delays introducing *Strangelove* until the Doomsday Machine is mentioned so that his scientific explanations are associated from the very start with death. The novel merely identifies him as a watchful presence and thereby loses the sudden visual impact of the film as he wheels slowly towards the President. In the latter, the image of the evil scientist has barely registered before Peter Sellers' exaggerated pronunciation shifts it towards comedy by dramatizing him as a parody Nazi. The novel keeps the comedy in a lower key, quietly hinting at his myopia (literal and metaphorical) and alerting the reader to his crippled hand which throws out implicit allusions to the scheming scientists of *Metropolis* and *Doctor No*.³⁶ Charles Maland has suggested that he also combines aspects of Edward Teller, Henry Kissinger and Herman Kahn in articulating an analytical approach to nuclear war based on disinterested calculation.³⁷ Once again no individual possesses unique characteristics, however, because General Turgidson half-quotes from Kahn. Certainly, the latter's study *On Thermonuclear War* (1960) stands behind the name and discussion of the Doomsday Machine, although the idea for such a device dated back to 1950 at least. *Strangelove*'s exposition is far more extreme than Kahn's and describes the device as cheap and reliable, both qualities which the latter questions. *Strangelove* can only take a positive role in the action once the Doomsday Machine has been fired. Until that point his very presence as an ex-Nazi casts an ironic light on the President's refusal to go down in history as the "greatest mass murderer since Adolf Hitler" (which Sellers plays for laughs in his uncontrollable fascist salutes) while *Strangelove*, like Werner Von Braun, is participating in a military program whose scale dwarfs anything from World War II.

Dr. Strangelove clearly addresses a reader/viewer who is alert to Freudian psychology and who will pick up the many hints of transference of the sexual onto the military domain of experience. As Norman O. Brown pointed out during a lengthy application of the theory of the death-wish, art makes the unconscious conscious and converts symptom into play: "the neurotic mechanism involves repression and a shutting of the eye of consciousness, and a resultant psychic automatism... Art does not withdraw the eye of consciousness, does not repress, and attains some freedom."³⁸ The characters of *Dr. Strangelove*, especially but not uniquely Kong, Turgidson and Strangelove himself, are determined by clear obsessions and compulsions. The comedy of the narrative reveals these compulsions as a form of ignorance and in every case presents psychic automatism as a mechanization of the self. Understanding *Dr. Strangelove*, then, involves identifying pathological subtext, a series of verbal and symbolic links embedded in the characters' discourse which they themselves hardly glimpse. The humor of the work is therefore quite different from Jules Feiffer's satirical cartoons on the arms race from the late Fifties. In "Boom!" (collected in *Passionella*, 1960) Feiffer rewrites the story of the latter as a graphic fairy tale which ridicules public apathy, and which culminates with a scientist inventing the ultimate bomb. The story ends with a radioactive cloud over the captain "and it worked," ironically playing subject off against the generic expectations of the narrative mode. *Dr. Strangelove*, by contrast, repeatedly refers to different levels of signification and uses its comedy to attack the collective mystification of East-West nuclear confrontation.

NOTES

- ¹ This term was borrowed from engineering in the late fifties and applied to a system of checks within the U.S. system of air defense. The *Oxford English Dictionary* credits George's novel with the first civilian use of the term. The novel was first published by T.V. Boardman (London and New York) in 1958 under the pen-name of Peter Bryant. Later that same year the Ace Books reprint changed the title to *Red Alert*. The 1961 Corgi Books edition retains the original title.
- ² This distrust subsequently became the subject of a novel by the Washington journalists Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey, *Seven Days in May* (1962), which describes an attempt by hawkish elements of the U.S. military to mount a coup.
- ³ Merritt Abrash, "Through Logic to Apocalypse: Science-Fiction Scenarios of Nuclear Deterrence Breakdown," *Science-Fiction Studies* 13 (1986): 131.
- ⁴ Peter George, *Two Hours to Doom* (London, 1961): 93.
- ⁵ *Two Hours*: 137. The novel was praised by Herman Kahn as a clever presentation of an "ominous possibility." (*On Thermonuclear War* [Princeton, 1961]: 44)
- ⁶ *Ibid.*: 32.
- ⁷ Stanley Kubrick, "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Cinema," *Films and Filming* (June 1963): 12.
- ⁸ Joseph Gelmis, *The Film Director As Superstar* (London, 1971): 309.

- ⁹ Peter George, *Dr. Strangelove Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (Boston, 1979): 1. The Gregg Press edition and the 1988 Oxford University Press reprint have identical pagination.
- ¹⁰ Albert Bermel, "The End of the Race," in Frederik Pohl, ed., *The Eighth Galaxy Reader*, (London, 1966): 77.
- ¹¹ Richard Gid Powers, "Introduction," *Dr. Strangelove* (Boston, 1979): xvi.
- ¹² William McKeen, "Terry Southern," *Encyclopedia of American Humorists*, Stephen H. Gale, ed. (New York and London, 1988): 413; Bruce Jay Friedman, "Foreword," *Black Humor* (London, 1965): viii.
- ¹³ Max F. Schulz, *Black Humor Fiction of the Sixties* (Athens, OH, 1973): 12. Nancy Pogel and William Chamberlain find self-reflexivity a common feature of black comedy films but do not discuss *Dr. Strangelove* in their survey, "Humor into Film: Self Reflections in Adaptations of Black Comic Novels," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 13;iii (1985): 187-193.
- ¹⁴ George W. Linden, "Dr. Strangelove," *Nuclear War Films*, Jack G. Shaheen, ed., (Carbondale, 1978): 58.
- ¹⁵ Gelmis: 309. This scene is also described in Michel Ciment's *Kubrick*, translated by Gilbert Adair (London, 1983): 208.
- ¹⁶ *Dr. Strangelove*: 103. In the movie Guano accuses Mandrake of being a "prevert."
- ¹⁷ Gelmis: 309.
- ¹⁸ Cf. Charles Maland, "Dr. Strangelove (1964); Nightmare Comedy and the Ideology of Liberal Consensus," *American Quarterly* (Winter 1979): 712.
- ¹⁹ Norman Kagan, *The Cinema of Stanley Kubrick* (New York, 1972): 112.
- ²⁰ *Dr. Strangelove*: 138.
- ²¹ Ciment: 157.
- ²² Maland: 707. The use of hand-held cameras for the shots of soldiers storming Burpelson Base similarly imitate documentary footage from World War II.
- ²³ *Dr. Strangelove*: 38.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*: 56.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*: 81. Emphasis added.
- ²⁶ MS. note to Joseph Heller, 30 July 1962; Heller Archive, Special Collections, Brandeis University Library.
- ²⁷ F. Anthony Macklin, "Sex and Dr. Strangelove," *Film Comment* 3 (Summer 1965): 55.
- ²⁸ Kagan: 137.
- ²⁹ Peter Biskind, *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York, 1983): 68.
- ³⁰ *Dr. Strangelove*: 25.
- ³¹ Thomas Allen Nelson, *Kubrick: Inside a Film Artist's Maze* (Bloomington, 1982): 92.
- ³² Macklin: 56.
- ³³ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, translated by Joan Riviere, James Strackley, ed., (London, 1975): 55-56, 59.
- ³⁴ Mortimer Ostow, "War and the Unconscious," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 19;i (January 1963): 27.
- ³⁵ *Dr. Strangelove*: 95.
- ³⁶ Leo Szilard, "How to Live with the Bomb and Survive," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 16;ii (February 1960): 58-73.
- ³⁷ In the 1962 movie *Doctor No*, the eponymous villain has lost his hands due to radioactivity.
- ³⁸ Maland: 709-710.
- ³⁹ Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytic Meaning of History* (New York, 1959): 62, 65.

DR. STRANGELOVE

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Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, demonstrates the destabilizing effect of sending and receiving, of *fort da*, back and forth, the movement of the subconscious as it moves toward speculation—the psychoanalytic subject constructed according to a pattern of sending and pulling back in—and on any epistemology in which knowledge is bound (erect) to the routes of communication. The film shows the arbitrariness of binary hierarchies, such as realistic/fantastic, naturalism/fantasy, and documentary/fiction. It offers familiar perspectives, but they are usually problematized. For example, the opening narration appears to be a call for documentary realism:

For more than a year, ominous rumors had been privately circulating among high-level Western leaders that the Soviet Union had been at work on what was darkly hinted to be the Ultimate Weapon, a Doomsday device. Intelligence sources traced the site of the top secret Russian project to the perpetually fog-shrouded wasteland below the Arctic peaks of the Zhokhov islands.

This narrator appears once more, briefly, in the film, and then disappears. And this documentary coding is upset in the next few minutes of the film by the sequence which follows it. The next sequence, over which the pencil-line credits appear, has two planes gently rocking together in mid-air. A B-52 bomber is refueled by a tanker aircraft, the sexual implication emphasized by the music, "Try a Little Tenderness."

Viewers are challenged by these first few scenes to consider just what sort of film *Dr. Strangelove* is. What relation to the film does the title have? Are the two planes having 'strange love'? And what relations does this copulation or suckling and the narration have to the rest of the film? What is to be made of Peter Seller's three roles? Connections are implied by never ratified. This gesture, this refusal to provide a center, a stable subject-position, places the film in sympathy with contemporary theorists who reject the human subject as a grounding center for human knowledge. Deleuze's formulation of decentered knowledge, insofar as this knowledge is intelligible, is apprehensible in terms of nomadic centers, provisional structures that are never permanent, always straying from one set of information to another. The viewer, like the misplaced Group-Captain Lionel Mandrake of the Royal Air Force, is trapped in a heterogeneous setting, searching for the clues that will make sense of the film's experience.

Kubrick's film overturns the traditional expectations of viewers through the opaquing of metaphor, and parodic juxtapositions. It blends gritty realism and naturalistic settings with fantastic characters and fantastic action. General Jack D. Ripper's office is seen within the frame through long camera takes and depth of field. From a distance, the wide-angle lens pulls this enclosure into

sharp focus and exaggerates its low ceiling and horizontal geometry. The shot reveals all the details that make up the office, and, as a parallel to Mandrake's role within this setting, challenges the audience to decode meaning, to make sense of it all. Camera shots are alternated between medium shots that place Ripper within the symmetry of balanced compositions and low-angle close-ups that blur out surrounding space and visually reinforce Ripper's non sequiturs. All the things that surround Ripper—the "Peace is Our Profession" slogan behind his desk, a bizarre tool/weapon for clipping cigars, his guns and model planes, are charged with the potential meaning.

A wheelchair bound scientist, Dr. Strangelove, recalls Fritz Lang's mad inventor, Rotwang, in *Metropolis*. He has a mechanical black-gloved arm and suffers from a tic. The Arm constantly threatens to *Sieg Heil*. The landscape of the film shifts among three highly localized settings within only a few hours of "real" time. Scenes occur simultaneously, but our viewing of a specific sequence is influenced by previous scenes, which may or may not have occurred simultaneously. Each setting is sealed off from the others—accessible only by technology, by the telephone. Realism and the fantastic collide. Kong's B-52 contains images of naturalism and the fantastic. In a cramped atmosphere illuminated only by source lighting, a cinema-verité camera works close-in through quick zooms and jerky motions to show the intricacy of instrument panels and attack profiles. Yet this setting is also the habitat of Major Kong, who acts out a private drama in a cowboy hat. When told of the message received over the CRM 114, "Wing attack plan R," Kong replies "I've been to one world's fair, a picnic, and a rodeo, and that's the stupidest thing I've ever heard of over a pair of earphones." The War Room, where fighting is not allowed, is triangular with a metallic black floor. From a height angle the camera reveals a world encircled by darkness but internally organized, suggesting that the inhabitants are always already in a mine shaft. The use of a long-focal-length lens puts a documentary distance between the viewer and the President at the round table, intensifying a feeling of eavesdropping on a summit crisis. Sharp and deep wide-angle imagery is blended with close-ups in which the edges of the frame lose resolution. But the dialogue and action in the War Room is often absurd. Turgidson fights with the Russian ambassador, to be chastised by the President: "I've never heard of such behavior in the war room."

It is filled with phones and books and pamphlets—Turgidson's books have titles: *War Alert Actions Book* and *World Targets in Megadeaths*. There is also a large buffet of gourmet food and pastries. At the conclusion of the film, the President sits next to the buffet, drink in hand, and considers Strangelove's mine-shaft computations. Every place setting at the round table has a telephone. The President has a conversation with the drunk Premier, at the home of the Premier's mistress: "Now then, Dimitri, you know how we've always talked about the possibility of something going wrong with the Bomb. The bomb, Dimitri. The Hydrogen Bomb," Turgidson receives a call during a meeting from his mistress, and when it appears as if every B-52 has been recalled to base,

Turgidson busily organizes a prayer meeting, sends a message to God.

But communication is unreliable, difficult or impossible. One setting is a locked office in an air base; another is the cabin of a B-52 bomber; and the third is the underground War Room at the Pentagon. The story weaves itself through these three locations in straight cuts. In the film, the characters are challenged to create structures which will make sense of apparently discontinuous and random events, only to find such pattern-making exposed as insanity or arbitrary. It is General Ripper's paranoid anxiety about the waning potency of his "precious bodily essence," which he blames on an international communist conspiracy to fluoridate water that makes him activate the "Go" code, via a telephone conversation with Group Captain Mandrake, sending B-52's toward the Soviet Union. General Turgidson becomes so enamored of the attack on Russia that he cannot bear to recall the planes—he urges all-out war, figuring out the possible casualties: "I'm not saying we wouldn't get our hair mussed. I am saying only ten to twenty million killed, tops, depending on the breaks."

The telephone—communications—sending and receiving. As a site for the dissemination of voices, it plays an instrumental role in auditory hallucinations. It incorporates itself into the body and thinking of the schizophrenic as an object of clinical inquiry. Schizophrenic disorders, to cite Avital Ronnell, register the "fundamental shifts in affectivity and corporeal organization produced and commanded by technology." As an excess that promises to fill a lack and as a prosthetic extension of the body, the telephone supplements the loss of an organ, functioning as an amplification of the ear and mouth and as a "phantom genital." As part of a project to overcome the catastrophe of disconnection and long distance, particularly from the womb, the telephone invests itself in a libidinal economy regulated by the appeal of the absent mother.

The epistemology of the film from beginning to end can be seen as written in terms of sending and receiving messages, sending out and calling back the bombers. Sending and receiving the "Go" code and "Wing Attack Plan R," sending and receiving messages from the president, the Soviet premier, mistresses. There are a lot of communications exchanges going on in the film and these exchanges are what count as knowledge. Knowledge is structured in the logic of sending and receiving. What Ripper tries to do is close off communication lines, cut off telephonic communication and confiscate all personal radios. His cryptic FGB code, mechanically clicks into the B-52's CRM 114 and turns an instrument for receiving messages into one that cuts off communication (except with Ripper's OPE code prefix). How you control knowledge this gesture states, is to by controlling the routes along which messages are sent and received. No direct reliable line between characters can be counted on for communication—something keeps going wrong, the wrong messages are sent and received, the Soviet Premier, a "man of the people" doesn't speak English well, is drunk. He forgets the number of the People's Central Air Defense Headquarters at the general staff headquarters

and suggests the American president try Omsk information. Ripper's telephone conversation to the War Room, the one read aloud by Turgidson, (who comments, This man is obviously a psychotic"), sends a doomsday scenario when he tells them that "my boys will give you the best kind of start, 1400 megatons worth, and you sure as hell won't stop them now." Turgidson then talks about the "moment of truth" and the necessity of choosing "between two admittedly regrettable but nevertheless distinguishable post-war environments; one, where you got twenty million people killed and, the other, where you got one hundred fifty million people killed." Kong attempts to communicate reassurance to his men. He tells them he shares their "strong personal feelings about nuclear combat" and "promises them promotions and citations" when their mission is over. Once Kong's CRM 114 is destroyed, he and his crew are without a way of sending and receiving. He drops the bomb at the moment that Dr. Strangelove is reassuring the President that computers are better equipped than mortals to make the decision of who goes into the mine shaft and who stays behind to breathe Cobalt Thorium G. What the film shows over and over again is that the routes of communication, the technology of communication, are not stable, are not reliable—and that these routes are also the way knowledge is defined.

Lists—the film shows an interest in them. Ways of ordering experience and knowledge. Lists of names: Group Captain Lionel Mandrake, President Muffley, Dr. Strangelove, General "Buck" Turgidson, General Jack D. Ripper, colonel "Bat" Guano, Major T.J. "King" Kong, Ambassador de Sadesky, Miss Scott, Lieutenant Lothar Zogg, Merkwuerdigichliebe, "Laputa" (the "target of opportunity, which in Spanish means "whore"), Burpelson Air Base. The contents of a survival kit: a .45 pistol, ammunition, four day's emergency rations, nine packs of chewing gum, lipsticks, nylon stockings, prophylactics, and a combination, mini, Ruskie phrase book and bible. The mine shaft list: greenhouses for plant life (food and oxygen), breeding places for animals to be slaughtered (with particular emphasis on slaughtered). We could even make a list of the sexual imagery: starting with the names and adding the shapes of bombers and cigars, *Playboy* poses (Miss Scott's pose on the bed is the same as the centerfold's in Kong's magazine), the name of the target "Laputa" in Spanish means "whore," the survival kit, the bombers (which can be read as a womb, from which Kong is dropped, screaming), Major Kong's plummet to the target, with the H Bomb like a mighty symbol of potency clamped between his legs. The film concludes in an energized frenzy—Strangelove gets a bizarre excitement out of phrases like "animals could be bred and slaughtered" and the prospect of sexual reproduction, at a 10 to 1 ration in favor of men, who will be required to sacrifice monogamous relationships. In fact, Anthony Macklin calls the film a sex allegory, arguing it has "a progress from foreplay to explosion." But there are other possibilities as well, and the film is structured so to never allow us to be comfortable with a single interpretation.

The telephone. Fort Da. It reveals the affinities between technology and thinking as a response to the

experience of loss, anxiety, guilt and mourning; as a work of displacement, transference, and condensation, it inserts itself into psychoanalytic theory as a trope for reading the logic on unconscious transmissions and the symptomatology of schizophrenia, and as a communications medium, the telephone effaces its thingliness, lifting the voice into a proximity with the hieratic, the uncanny, and the phantasmatic that affiliates the technological impulse with the most profound desires of metaphysics and phonocentrism.

The arbitrary structure of *Dr. Strangelove* highlights heterogeneity, demonstrating that unity is a construct and not natural or give. It poses a number of problems posed by the routes of exchange and the sending and receiving of calls, including the call that initiates the action when Mandrake receives Ripper's call send to the wing "Plan R." Why the telephone? To Avital Ronnell, "It destabilizes the identity of self and other, subject and thing, it abolishes the originariness of the site; it undermines authority and constantly menaces the existence of art. It is itself unsure of its identity as object, thing, piece of equipment, perlocutionary intensity or art work; it offers itself as an instrument of the destinal alarm." The compulsion for the absent Other compels technological thinking. The telephone comes into being not as the culmination of some equipmental teleology but as a commemorative art work brought forth by the recession of the Other into deafness (Mrs. Bell) and death (Melville, the other). The telephone is identified with mourning and the desire to recuperate the Other. As a transmitter for the maternalizing call of conscience, the telephone enforces the "superegoical dimension" of the voices programming the schizophrenic. This telepathology calls into question the limbus between thinking and technology and suggest the extent to which the retooling of the subject—exemplified by the schizophrenic—has been engineered by the incursion of technology into the body.

"MAN-MADE WEATHER": MEDIA, MURDER, AND THE FUTURE IN *NATURAL BORN KILLERS*

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Increasingly, gaps seemed to appear between the ideological possibilities of controlling one's life and the affective impossibility of intervening into the future.

—Lawrence Grossberg, "Cinema, Post-Modernity, and Authenticity"

I sometimes think the media has dreamed our history up.

—Oliver Stone, Commencement Address, UC Berkeley, 1994

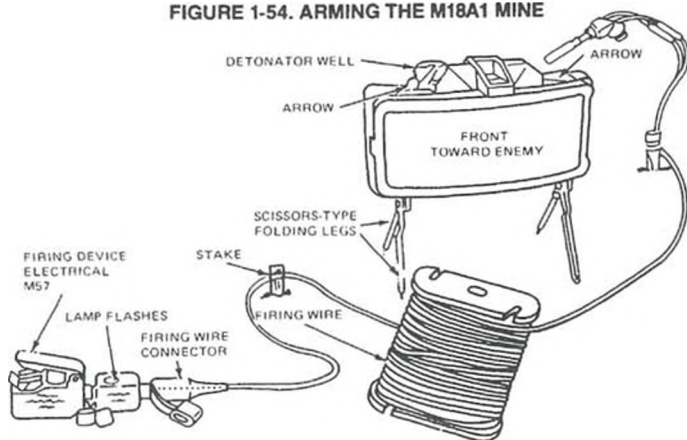
When I get mad, and I get pissed,
I grab a pen and write out a list,
of all you assholes who won't be missed.

—L7, "Shitlist"

Since the Academy Awards this April, every time I go into the local Blockbuster, I feel assaulted by Gumpness. There, near the checkout counter, are piles of "Gump Happens" tee-shirts, "Bubba-Gump Shrimp" caps, copies of Winston Groom's novel, books and audiotapes titled *Gumpisms*. Last year, when *Forrest Gump* was released, the makers of such merchandise were apparently caught offguard—no one predicted that Gumpness would be so large, so those folks who do such things had to hurry up and make stuff to be displayed, advertised, and sold. But now, they've clearly caught up, and sales are, according to a Blockbuster clerk I spoke with, quite brisk. There are any number of reasons for the enormous popular success of Gump-the-non-action-hero. Offering dumb-luck serenity as a means for "getting by," he figures a heavily moralized will to passivity. That is, he's about freedom, from responsibility and from history. At a time when Newt Gingrich and Robert Dole are making a "Contract on America" and conservative radio talk shows are making record numbers, Gump seems about right, in all senses of the word. This despite the fact that star Tom Hanks and director Robert Zemeckis insist that the movie has no political agenda, that it's about human and U.S. values, as if these are congruent. They can say such things, of course: they're very straight, very sincere white men who've won prizes and praise for bringing Gumpish universality to cultural (un)consciousness, twenty years after the fall of Saigon.

It is possible, I suppose, to take his filmic creators at their vacuous word. As Hal Hinson writes, Gump "has emerged as an Everyman symbol of all things to all people," but, "[i]n truth—and this is what makes him such a scary phenomenon—he is hardly anything at all." (14 August 1994: G1) Whether running down football fields or "across America," *Forrest-moving-in-place* (going nowhere) starts to resemble what Lawrence Grossberg has called "salvation without authenticity."

FIGURE 1-54. ARMING THE M18A1 MINE



representation that reduces the complexities of "the postmodern condition of everyday life" to manageable proportions. (1993: 204) But trying to gauge "authenticity"—of emotion, motivation, meaning—is a perennial problem; it only seemed easier in the past, as the nostalgic (not to mention racist and misogynist) revisionism of *Forrest Gump* attests. Living in "the postmodern condition," perhaps, means making sense of what we all know makes no sense. How else to read McNamara's too-late apology for misconceiving the Vietnam War, or the ways that the New-Right-with-teeth inspires "internal terrorism" (anti-abortion violence and the Oklahoma bombing being the most recent nationally prominent examples). If Gumpness as sign of the New Right's ascendancy causes concern for the rest of us, the movie itself makes ultra-visible the ongoing transformation of the Vietnam Era in current popular culture. Indeed, it articulates the ways that the political movements of that Era have been reshaped, recontextualized, and rewritten to accommodate self-bolstering images of the conservative Nineties. There it is: *Forrest Gump* revises the U.S. war in Viet Nam so that an especially nice, not especially pumped-up guy "gets to win this time."

It's clear that the movie practices and encourages a fairly diverse and politically pointed set of erasures, all of which have to do with history which is somehow disturbing. Such erasure is most explicit, indeed literal, when Army veteran Forrest stands up to make a speech about his war experiences. Pushed up to the microphone by none other than faux-Abbie-Hoffman-in-a-U.S.-flag shirt, Forrest begins to talk before a crowd of anti-war demonstrators at the DC Reflecting Pool. The sound is cut by some meddling lifer, so we never hear a word Forrest says about "that war." (Instead we see him reunite with his infocused flowerchild object of affection, Jenny.) This is not to say that there's a fixed history—personal or public—which might need to be challenged by speaker Gump in this scene; it is to note the film's inability to imagine what such a narrative, by a blessedly ignorant grunt, might be like. (And consider Forrest's silence next to Christopher Walken's lengthy speech in *Pulp Fiction*, as he tells the story of keeping a buddy's gold watch up his ass for three years in the Hanoi Hilton, a nasty, grimly subversive speech which underlines all kinds of U.S. cultural anxieties—not to say hysterias—over masculinity since the war.)

Forrest Gump's messing with history is no secret. To the contrary, as the movie begat various "making of" articles and television specials, it was from the first promoted as a spectacularly FX-ed viewing event. It makes an elaborate, technically impressive joke of erasing history, a joke which grants emotional satisfaction and moral comfort for its target audience (the so-called "Middle Americans"). More to the point (of this comfort), it never acknowledges—or sees the need to acknowledge—the multiple ways that history is always a function of such media wizardry; representing "history" as a series of cool digital tricks, Gump resists considering ethical culpability or political effect, insisting instead on the great good fortune of an unsuspecting whiteguy hero, an "American Dreamer" of preposterous dimensions. Begin-

ning with its first digital-wonder image—which inserts Forrest's ancestor into the founding of the Klu Klux Klan via *Birth of a Nation* (how it uses *Birth* as a sign of history seems worth wondering about as well)—and ending with the death of his wife Jenny by (unmentionable) AIDS—because she led a corrupted, abused woman's life while he led a charmed, whiteguy one—the movie goes out of its way to represent a cleaned-up past where the under-conscious hero bears no responsibility for anything that goes on around him, good or bad. In other words, it makes the "Vietnam Syndrome" look decisively "kicked."

As a kind of antidote to *Forrest Gump*, I'd like to resurrect another recent Vietnam war movie, one which was all but disappeared during last summer's more successful popularity campaigns by *Gump*, *Pulp Fiction* and *True Lies*. I want to talk about *Natural Born Killers*. Set in a more or less current U.S. media-mind-scape, it's not obviously a Vietnam war movie, though it is directed by Oliver Stone, which goes some distance toward making it one by definition. As a text which engages both the particularities of post-war identity constructions and what might be termed a broad cultural legacy of the Vietnam era (designated here as a pervasively mediated violence and a generational anxiety and distrust), *NBK* works as an in-your-face *Anti-Gump*. That is, where Zemeckis' film tends to smooth things over, Stone's movie exhilarates in a series of angry, grandly awful effects. Instead of fixing history, *NBK* refigures it as a terrible, immediate problem—an irresolvable, ongoing system of representation and interpretation—by making its revisionary machinations dreadfully visible.

Significantly, history as a problem is embodied by two young protagonists, Mickey and Mallory Knox (Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis), who are portrayed simultaneously as victims of and villains in personal and cultural forces, in a confusing, thrilling, spectacle-driven non-narrative (the plot might be reduced to this: they kill everyone). Their status as youth is important, I think, for understanding the film's negotiation of history for and with its mostly young audiences. (My informal sources here include friends, students, and discussants on internet lists such as "Rocklist" and "BadSubjects.") Further, their status as "youth" is predictably paradoxical: they're set in opposition to an adult cultural order (the legal and penal system), but at the same time they're desired objects of that order (indicated by the mass media coverage of their three-week murder spree, including headlines from *The New York Post*, *People*, *Esquire* and *USA Today*, and sensational television news and tabloid pieces). On one level, they're so "desired" because they would seem to denote the limit of good behavior, the edge of conventionality. Charles Acland argues that "youth-as-problem can be seen as a necessary element in the constitution of the adult economic social"; as a temporary, transgressive "social category" and more specifically, as a set of images, "youth" operates as a socially productive "dialectic," marking the boundaries between deviance and normativity, and past and present. (29)

Designated deviants Mickey and Mallory reveal "youth's" conflicted relationship to history as it is produced and consumed as an ever-inconstant narrative,

one which can't address them—as a next-generation of “youth” who aren't even disillusioned, as they have so few illusions to begin with—in any coherent way. This is an incoherence that resonates for many young viewers. And it's a conflict that emerges because history in *NBK* is unhinged from its familiar representational particulars and fixities. That is, the movie complicates history in two ways: first, it collapses the visual registers and effects of archival footage (say, images of bombs exploding, Hitler and Stalin before approving crowds) and filmic fiction (DePalma's *Scarface* and Peckinpah's *The Wild Bunch*); and second, it refuses a movie-conventional, internally logical history of diegetic events (for instance, Mallory's personal background is translated to a sitcom, and public events like Hitler's inspection of troops or the Knoxes' trial, become hypermediated fragments, often framed by television monitors or motel and car windows). By representing history as a perpetual barrage of effects which produce more effects, *NBK* takes up the complex intersections of individual interpellation and resistance, social constructionism and “natural” determination, and especially, raises questions of innocence and culpability in any of it, both within the film and in youth responses to it.

The film begins and ends with (morally weighty) Leonard Cohen songs. The first, “Waiting for the Miracle,” is accompanied by images of a desert landscape, a diner, and a television inside, tuned to *Ozzie and Harriet*, *77 Sunset Strip*, Richard Nixon, and a black and white monster movie—in other words, a quick trot through U.S. history from the fifties to the seventies, the “Vietnam era” as televisual backdrop to charismatic mass murderers Mickey and Mallory, in love and on the loose, about to kill the diner's staff and customers. The “waiting” appears to be over by the end of the film, when closing credits and shots of Mickey and Mallory with kids on the road in their Winnebago, come under Cohen's “The Future”: “I've seen the future, brother,” he sings, “and it's murder.” If the initial images suggest that historical events can be effectively condensed and understood as a series of familiar media images, the penultimate sequence, which includes brief shots of Lyle Menendez, Lorena Bobbitt, O.J. Simpson, Waco, Rodney King, and Tonya Harding (just before we see the happy Knox family) would seem to confirm the same about the present and future.

But there's something else going on here. While many viewers have read *Natural Born Killers* as either a “glorification” of violence or a sledgehammer polemic against current mass media, it also offers, I think, a fairly sophisticated analysis of the relationship between media producers and consumers. This relationship is clearly displayed in images of corrupt(ed) viewers and makers, like the young interviewees who think Mickey and Mallory are “totally hot,” or Wayne Gale (Robert Downey Jr.), hyper-repulsive host of *American Maniacs* (the film's easy compilation-target tab-tv show [arguably descended from Vietnam era television images of domestic and warzone violence]), who rudely calls his audience “those nitwits out there in zombieland,” who don't “remember anything.” (In war, history is the first casualty?) The relationship is more complicated in the assumptions

the movie makes about its audiences, the multi-coded ways that it positions them in relation to difficult characters and events. Tabloid tv interviewees from around the world compare the couple to James Dean, Jack Kerouac, and Jim Morrison; Mickey wonders aloud about the violence in today's movies: “Doesn't anybody in Hollywood believe in kissing anymore?” (meanwhile, his channel surfing shows *Scarface* and *Midnight Express*: since *The Doors* and *JFK*, Stone seems increasingly self-aware of his own part in the media processes of history-making).

The film's most prominent set-piece, *I Love Mallory* transmutes Mallory's “homelife” into a generationally-framed grotesque, such that raised-on-television childhood becomes itself a matter of sitcom conventions, a process of perpetual translation. By assuming its audience's awareness of such conventions, the film names their complicity in the sequence's production of insidious meanings and visceral effects, a complicity which is necessarily distressing. Images of her father (Rodney Dangerfield) groping and verbally abusing her are accompanied by a canned laughtrack, Mickey's entrance as the bloodied Meatman by Fonzie-ish applause, little brother Kevin's asides (“You mean Mallory's my mom?!”) by soundtrack dings and whistles: these jarring combinations are both comic and horrific as they solicit audience identifications, of the conventions and, by extension, with their own experiences of watching tv. (And young viewers understand more than anyone the limits of such experiences: they don't take *The Brady Bunch* any more seriously than they take *Married with Children*, which means that both circulate as ugly, laughable fictions. Even a mainstream youth movie like *Reality Bites* makes the observation that “Mr. Brady died of AIDS.”) That the bulk of these self-conscious viewers are presumed to be young is suggested by the Trent Reznor-produced soundtrack (with songs by Nine Inch Nails, L7, Patsy Cline, Jane's Addiction, Dr. Dre, and Patti Smith) as well as by the “MTV-like” editing, cartoons, and permanently skewed camera angles; the film addresses this audience as mass-media-literate, equipped with an acute sense of irony and well-founded disrespect for commercial, educational, and governmental institutions.

Such uncomfortably layered positioning in turn solicits some self-reflection. (Why are we laughing at this?) And as it makes this self-distancing inevitable, it also makes its own erratic but relentless moralizing explicitly tenuous. The strategic displacement of the family onto the overmediated tv image sucks its previous ideological incarnation—as social and/or biological institution—into the terrifying vacuum of cultural constructedness. Like everything else in this movie, the family is represented as an onslaught of intersecting surfaces, collapsing in on Mr. Patriarchy himself, Mallory's bug-eyed dad. When Mickey comes to murder Ed, he's in his underwear, drinking beer, and watching television wrestling (“What am I watching?! A couple of fags!?”): he becomes spectacular in this suddenly hyperbolic everyday pose. But it's a pose that the film italicizes by repetition. Every man with whom Mallory comes in contact reminds her—and her audience—of him, as indicated by her recurring “flashback” images of his

bloated face, either looming over her or drowning in the fishtank; dead or alive, he's eternally oppressive. Beset by male characters who come on to her, stick their tongues down her throat, or shake their dicks at her, Mallory (accurately) reads every assault as it descends from her father's. When, stranded in the desert, Mickey calls her a "stupid bitch," she says, "You stupid bitch? That's what my father used to call me. I thought you'd be more creative than that." Ready with an answer, nineties-guy Mickey says, "Just relax, all right? It's me, your lover, not some demon, not your father, all right?" "You're not my lover," she asserts, and the film seems to concur, repeatedly showing Mickey as demon and as a replication of her father.

As the most compelling female character Stone has yet imagined, Mallory is charged up with a cogent, ongoing commentary on masculinity as pathology. To this point, the men around her collapse onto one another: Mickey, her dad, the gas station attendant whom she seduces then shoots dead (ostensibly for giving "the worst head I've ever had in my life"), the scuzzy cop Scagnetti (Tom Sizemore), Wayne Gale, and prison warden McKloskey (Tommy Lee Jones). Looking and acting alike, the guys are monsters: Mickey and Wayne appear as red-paint-covered devils, Scagnetti and McKloskey as bad-haired, sweaty twins, her father as everyone's overseer.

As she intuits the breakdown of this system of outdated masculinist ideals, Mallory is clearly differentiated from Mickey; he plays Wild West, cool-guy avenger, while she understands and represents the social and political limits to their mayhem. Mickey, unsurprisingly, translates her function as teaching him "to love," but this sounds too much like his/Stone's continuing misapprehension of "femininity" as the spiritual nirvana sought by men who remain resolutely unself-aware of their own participation in a system of oppression and representation. That is, it sounds like more of the same. And indeed, much of the violence which is "more of the same" in *NBK*—as it's viewed, enacted, or dramatized by *American Maniacs*—measures simultaneously masculine degeneration and fulfillment of this "system," usually along an axis of class and political stereotypes. Mickey and Mallory's on-screen victims tend to be under- or working-class, people who watch too much tv and lean right (these include her parents, a donut-eating cop, redneck diner patrons, prison guards and a crowd of shoppers at a gun store, who, as Todd Ramlow puts it, "are probably on their way home from work to exercise every American's right to own a submachine gun." [Ramlow 3])

One victim who exaggerates and so reasserts this moral schematic is the Indian (Russell Means). As anyone who's seen *The Doors* might recall, peyote-induced visions, time-lapsed clouds, and red-flashing campfires (the media-bite version of Native American culture) are central to Stone's ethical architecture; just so, the Indian is granted special insights into Mickey and Mallory's fiendish souls (he sees the words "demons" and "too much tv" inscribed across their chests). He's also, not incidentally, the film's most express visual and narrative link to the Vietnam war: Mallory notices his son's military photo and a letter of condolence from President Johnson.

In this way the Indian incarnates a full range of U.S. historical atrocities, as victim. His murder (Mickey wakes from a fever-dream about his father and shoots him in a frenzy) grants Mallory her most pronounced moment of ethical clarity. So that the audience can't miss it, she points at Mickey and repeats, "Bad bad bad bad bad bad!" As the Indian's grandson yells at them from a nearby hilltop (he's wearing an "Army" tee-shirt, not exactly by the way), Mickey protests that it was "an accident"; but Mallory rejects that story, saying, "There are no accidents!" Again, her voice seems especially resonant, as it italicizes the problem of assigning or understanding guilt, whether systemic, culturally conditioned, overdetermined, and/or "natural born."

The Indian's murder leads to a spectacular sequence which inverts but also reassigns Mickey's "guilt" as representative whiteguy. Mickey and Mallory traipse through a field full of overwhelmingly symbolic rattlesnakes, and when they are—inevitably—bitten, they seek anti-venom "juice" at the Drug Zone (where Mickey encounters a clerk who watches *American Maniacs* on late-night television and consequently trips the alarm). With this, the couple is apprehended by the police, following a standoff where Mickey and Scagnetti argue back and forth over who's "got the balls" to do more damage. The scene's climactic image puts Mickey in a position approximating and hyperbolizing Rodney King's, as he's beaten by cops with batons and tasers, under spotlights and boom mikes, in front of video newscameras. Even as it uses the King video as a master-sign of victimization (and in the process, evacuates racism from the scene), the image underlines that *NBK* is fully immersed in the legacy of the Vietnam war as the "first television war"; not only is television "everywhere," but its role as a state-ordained surveillance mechanism is secured. As Scagnetti leads Mallory away, she sings, deliriously but also meaningfully, "These boots were made for walkin..." Get it: the Vietnam era is relentless.

Once the couple is removed to prison, the movie continues to make frequent connections between history-as-media and the apparently inevitable production of next-generation poster-kids Mickey and Mallory as killers. They are "natural born," in that they're delivered into a rampantly chaotic technoculture predicated on violence as entertainment, education, and ethic. "There's no escaping here," Mallory tells one victim to be. And the Knoxes, the film proposes, are no exception. Even the "abuse-excuse" receives lacerating meta-interpretations in this context. Scagnetti attributes his obsession with "law and order" to his witnessing of his mother's murder by Charles Whitman from the University of Texas tower. But it's clear that he's more obsessed with control and domination (he brutally strangles a young female prostitute named Pinky, then calls out to his soulmate Mickey). A psychiatrist (played by Stephen Wright) testifies to their probable experience, reading them like the psychotexts they've become: when asked—on camera, of course—if he thinks they were abused as children, he says, "Uh, I don't think, uh, I can't, uh, I wouldn't say, ah, no." As such abuse is typically deployed to explain individual sociopathologies, it can't work here, where the entire

population seems to be at risk and at fault; Mickey and Mallory's excess isn't a transgression, but an evolving norm.

It's a norm framed precisely as "media," what Mickey (rather poetically) calls "man-made weather." It's inevitable, shifting, beyond control. Perhaps the most hopeful way to understand this media-formation is that the free press is unstoppable: shut it out of Desert Storm (another weather metaphor?), and it will come back and report being shut out, reveal the lie of "military approved" reports, and eventually, uncover the web of U.S. untruths and atrocities that forms its history. Stone's overtly Vietnam war movies, *Platoon*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, *Heaven and Earth*, and *JFK*, once imagined this potential for outing the facts, located in so-sincere composite characters like Chris-Sheen-Stone, Kovick-Cruise-Stone, Hayslip-Hep Thi Le-Stone, and Costner-Garrison-Stone (I probably needn't point out that Stone functions as the moral ground for each character). In each case, the truth will out because of individual perseverance in the face of media and governmental excesses. Pretty to think so.

NBK is less hopeful but more incisive about this nexus of media impulse and individual agency, in ways that appeal to young viewers, who assume from jump street that the media lie. As Grossberg observes, current youth culture is typically premised on a "logic of authentic inauthenticity," such that you can adopt certain identities, but "you must do so reflexively (not necessarily self-consciously, one can just as easily take that for granted) knowing that there is no way to justify the choice. The only authenticity is to know and even admit that you are not being authentic, to fake it without faking the fact that you are faking it." (1993: 206) Young viewers tend to "get it"; when they laugh at Mickey and Mallory's exploits, it's not, as one worried parent suggested to me, that they can't tell the difference between "real life" and "fiction." They laugh in part because the joke is on clearly inauthentic mouthpieces like McKloskey and Scagnetti (though this hardly means that Mickey and Mal are any more trustworthy or "authentic"; it's imperative in being able to fake it—as performer and viewer—to be able to hold contradictory ideas in your head simultaneously, good and bad are way-old concepts). And they laugh because they know—maybe more than they want to—that there's no escaping here.

Into this maelstrom of meaning which is, of course, everyday existence, the movie delivers media—systems of producers and consumers—as wholly accountable in war-as-media-event. Since Vietnam, or rather, since Stone's previous explorations of the theme, violence is increasingly the connective fiber of history and broadcasting. Mickey's Coca-Cola-backed interview with Wayne Gale is aired live, following the Superbowl so that, Gale tells him, "every moron on the planet" can and will see it. (Though Mickey and Mallory's previous, dramatically re-enacted appearance on *American Maniacs* "beat" shows on Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy, Mickey understands that they'll never top the Charles Manson show ratings: "Well," he observes, "it's pretty hard to beat the king.") Where Gale seeks an explanation from his

subject (in a form that fits between commercials), Mickey takes a more metaphysical view: "It's just murder, man," he tells a breathless Gale, surrounded by guards and tv crew members. "All god's creatures do it in some form or another." Right. Meanwhile, the visual track shows images of decay (fruit rotting in time lapse), sexual "excess" (a woman showering, her breasts hyperfocused by blood-red lighting), environmental destruction (a bulldozer taking down trees), a bloody headless body in an arm-chair, black-and-white fifties viewers watching the full-color interview on television, and Mickey's fellow prisoners—significantly, a group comprised almost entirely of Latino and black men—applauding his pronouncements on the "nature" of the system ("We're all told you're a no good piece a shit from the time we could breathe; after a while you kinda become bad").

The accompanying images, however, suggest that Mickey's own "life" is a media production (which it is; he's a movie character, after all): the combinations of televisual and video footage recode his apparent memories—a shot of his father killing himself and another of distraught little-blond-perfect-Mickey—as part of an image continuum, where personal memory and public media are interchangeable. In other words, Mickey is a cultural effect. Calling himself "fate's messenger," he explains to Gale (and the television/movie audiences). "I know a lot of people who deserve to die... Everybody got somethin' in their past, some sin, some secret thing." The major unforgiven—social, historical, political—sin, in Stone's universe, is always the Vietnam war (and as McNamara's confessional suggests, there are always new and profitable ways to rehearse this "secret thing"). In this light, Mickey and Mallory could be overdetermined monsters descending on a society plagued by its alternately repressed and spectacularized past. "Only love can kill the demon," repeats Gale after Mickey. "Hold that thought." Cut to the much-hyped Coke polar bears, trundling across an absurd, digitized tundra.

As this supremely ironic juxtaposition-moment implies, *NBK* won't (can't?) grant any cause-and-effect linear history. Similarly, as it tracks the past which is also the future, the movie rejects the conventional representation of such linearity, realism. Though realism is the mode which won Stone Oscars and critical acclaim back in the day of *Platoon* and *Born on the Fourth of July*, it now appears that the filmmaker is quite over that particular enduring fiction. Focusing on youth concerns and experiences, *NBK*'s persistently dizzying visual register won't slow down for stable meanings. As it drags us along on its roadtrip through an hysterical media hell—animation, digitization, lo-fi video, super-8, still photos—*NBK* underlines the difficulty (not to say impossibility) of gauging definitive differences among reality, realism, and authenticity (of affect, of investment), those familiar cinematic indicators of moral and emotional situatedness: instead, viewers confront characters-as-poses and multiple versions of each narrative moment; it's two hours plus of "authentic inauthenticity." Staked in irony, which assumes shared knowledge (you have to know the codes, to "get it"), *NBK* plays fast and loose with familiar formulae and binary categories (good/bad, inside/outside, his-

tory/fiction), insisting that we pay attention to ourselves watching it.

This play culminates in the prison riot which allows Mickey and Mallory to escape, a sequence that was criticized for its visual chaos and narrative breakdown, those incoherences which seem to be precisely the point. Indeed, the climax is framed as a process of excessive mediation. Just before his interview, Mickey prepares himself with a gesture that recalls and refracts an infamous Vietnam war movie moment: the introduction of Kurtz in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. We see him, shadowed, in black and white, head bowed, reflected in a mirror; he takes both hands and smooths his suddenly-bald head, making plain his cultural genealogy, his connection to Brando's famous embodiment of perfectly rational, perfectly willful, perfectly U.S. "horror." As "the only possible claim to authenticity," this act—its weirdness, its sense, its exemplary irony—stages the riot as a kind of Vietnam war revisited, or more exactly and more appropriately for a young audience who "knows" the war through movies and television, a Vietnam war movie revisited. (Note as well that Mickey and Mallory are led to safety by fellow prisoner Owen, played by Arliss Howard, most famous for playing the doomed Cowboy in Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*.) Just as the interview concludes with Mickey's declaration that he is "a natural born killer," the riot explodes and the state's fragile system of control over its black and Latino inmates collapses—while the cameras keep rolling and drum-beat music builds the tension. Narrated by the profoundly undone Wayne Gale, the riot is yet another story of avenging and returning victims of oppression. Significantly, however, it's one that Mickey and Mallory insist has little to do with them: "We didn't have nothin' to do with that riot," she says later to Gale's still-running camera. "The truth is, it was, whatchamacallit?" "Fate," Mickey prompts her. "Yeah, fate."

This denial of responsibility—or even participation—is important, as it expands the question of what it means to be a "natural born killer." On one level, Mickey and Mallory are profoundly irrelevant to the inmates' response to a systemic racism and oppression that extends far beyond the prison walls; on another level, they function as a problematic sign of being "oppressed," for Gale's show, for the movie and for their audiences. Here, on its way to a cynically "redemptive" finale (Mickey and Mal as happy parents? I don't think so...), the film makes its most important intervention into the usually seamless constructive processes of history. *NBK* ends with all its seams showing. History and media collapse. For it's eventually the camera that serves as surviving witness to Mickey and Mallory's only (apparently) well-considered murder: Mickey tells Wayne, "If we let you go, we'd be just like everybody else. Killing you and what you represent is a statement. I'm not one hundred percent exactly sure what it's saying, but it's a statement." This last qualification complicates the easy-message (all "tv scumbags" must die), and reframes Mickey and Mallory as reluctant, confused representatives of an incipient, can't-help-but-be-self-conscious nihilism. That Mickey and Mallory ride off down the highway with kids in tow may seem to give them and their audience some more

space, some place to go or imagine themselves. But it's a dire and ironic finale as well, certainly less hopeful than cyclical, less an image of individual self-understanding than cultural self-replication.

In the context of such replication, I think it's important to note one response to Stone's movie, Dr. Dre's late 1994 video, "Natural Born Killaz." Taking as its point of departure two contemporary and intersecting media texts, *Natural Born Killers* and the overkill coverage of the Nicole Brown Simpson-Ron Goldman murders, the video features a controversial plotline in which the police (the chief investigator is played by John [Good Times] Amos) are tracking two killers named Dr. Dre and Ice Cube. While Five-0 is busy deploying helicopters and other "manhunt" technologies, Dre and Cube—always already dead—sit back to back, in what looks like a hellish throne, surrounded by flames, trash, and abandoned buildings. It's the inner city as vibrant, operatic set, or more precisely, as the legacy of "Vietnam" (the era, the movements, the failures) that *Natural Born Killers* can't begin to imagine. For if the war has been variously reconfigured as institutional mismanagement and/or ideological misunderstanding, what is repeatedly suppressed by critical narratives like *Natural Born Killers* or cover-up narratives like *Forrest Gump*, is the fact that the war—its conception, its rationale, its implementation—was always about race and racism.

The visual narrative of "Natural Born Killaz" both makes this historical point and its connections to current cultural conditions (in a way that apparently alarmed some viewers—it was edited for MTV). Dre and Cube kill Brown and Goldman (who are shown with digitally distorted [erased] faces) and then are hunted down (and killed) by a squad of mostly black cops (one marksman is played by Tupac Shakur). Racism is here conceived as a systemic pathology, produced by institutional power and oppressive representation, and resulting in "natural born killers." As it answers Stone's film, the video emphasizes the ways that racism—as an ongoing cultural order—shapes perceptions and actions, makes culture into nature. "Journey with me into the mind of a maniac / doomed to be a killer since I came out the knapsack," raps Dre, "I'm in a murderous mindstate, from the heart of the terror, I see the devil in the mirror." With this introduction as a kind of "spirit-figure," a representation of a specifically black male rage, Dre echoes but also amplifies and clarifies Mickey's nebulous, naive, white-centered explanation of "fate." This isn't the mea culpa figure of Colonel ("Kill them all") Kurtz (reflecting McNamara?) in the mirror: it's the figure of the response. In Dr. Dre's rap, the point is not so much that murder is "natural," as much as it is culturally and historically inevitable, the result of centuries of oppression and fear. "I'm hot like lava, you got a problem? I got a problem-solver and his name is revolver."

Also performing as an overdetermined, "natural born killa," Cube raps, "I don't understand the logic in my dreams, but I understand that I like the sounds of sirens, springs from the streets of strychnine. So much pain. Migraine. Headache. I can hear his bones break." The images connoted by the lyrics are even more powerful

than what is visible in the video: focused on physicalized pain and deliverance, the "logic" of such dreams emphasizes the all-too-real surrealism of being black and male in the contemporary U.S. When the performers break into the murder-narrative imagery, they're bathed in eerie blue light and facing the camera to "testify," and their images run through a series of rapid, NBK-like transformations, from young to old to monstrous to raging, all reflecting a longstanding history of dominant oppression, black anger and frustration, a cycle of abuse and revenge which exacts terrible costs on all sides. Ice Cube continues, making keenly frightening pictures with his words: "Terror illustrates my error. Now I can't hang around my mama cause I scare her. Feels like I'm busting a nut when I open you up. Cause your body is exposed to the midnight mist. Oh quick motherfuckers, give my wing a kiss." Listen up.

Representing and critiquing a socio-political environment increasingly premised on a "natural" fear of black men, the video delivers to such loaded expectations, while also displaying the pain—the blood—that such expectations draw. As Mickey Knox might put it, "You wanted reality?" Or, as Ice Cube does put it, "So fuck how you living, I'm the unforgiven psycho-driven murderer. It's organic, don't panic, I can't stand it, goddamit, schizophrenic. So fuck Charlie Manson. I stretch him out....I hit him with a brick and I'm dancin'."

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POETRY by ANDRENA ZAWINSKI

I have a sorrow not wholly mine but another's.

—Hayden Carruth, from "On a Certain Engagement South of Seoul."

YOU GET THE PICTURE, AMERICA

In this movie, you'll revel in the opening effect—
the good soldier's genuflect at the Wall, his reflection
cast brighter than he is before it, focus blurred
in a glint off medals of merit of honor of valor
washed in upon the narcotic Memorial Day sun.

The camera's long shot will pull you in on a close-up,
as he runs his fingers along the trail light
of inscribed names. In a black and white still,
he will read one—as if touching blind in braille.

There will be this slight diversion in the roll
of muffled drums and bleat of mournful horns,
other monuments sprawling in the backdrop.
You'll watch him stroke in stroboscope the name
with charcoal onto onionskin. He'll lay down at
the base a wreath of sweet gardenia tinted orange
from where hollow-eyed a pinned bronzed eagle stares.

In this part you will get to think, to invent
heroes big-as-life on the screen's theater of war.

But just then in comes an ill-played comic relief,
a post-revolutionary hipster hawking from his banner
buttons to the tourist trade that read, *I Wasn't There But I Care*.
The audience will nervously chuckle, but this won't do
just about when you're supposed to be getting serious.

Enter the special effects. You'll need 3-D glasses for flashbacks.
The good soldier will take an about-face
into a trench showered by mortar fire, write home
blushing between love scented sheets, dreaming
a firecracker sky, peachy curtains flirting the frame.

This is the point where you expect the plot to unfurl;
but this screenplay is designed with Cannes in mind,
so the good soldier delivers a fractured line:
Did anyone ever ask me, America?

Here you'll be directed to think. You'll think you'll catch on
when the montage reels by for the unknown soldiers:

—&—

One wheels marbled lobbies, legal briefs flagging
his cut off knees. One free-bastes cities with a thumb
stump hand taken by a bad grenade. Some bagman, the
can-you-spare-a-dimeman, catwalks New York alleys,
boxes in the up and coming doorways. Grabbing his dick
hard on a Telegraph corner in Berkeley, another swears
in living color the name "America" as *Pussy, Whore, Cunt*
under the tie-dyed sunset. Christ-plain and simple,
one more will forge survival crossbows and missals
of catechismal poetry from Oregon wilderness trails.
One more takes the Pulitzer, then blows his brains out
across the stage.

Here comes the sun in a hazy freeze-frame,
holding back its light, everything inside out.

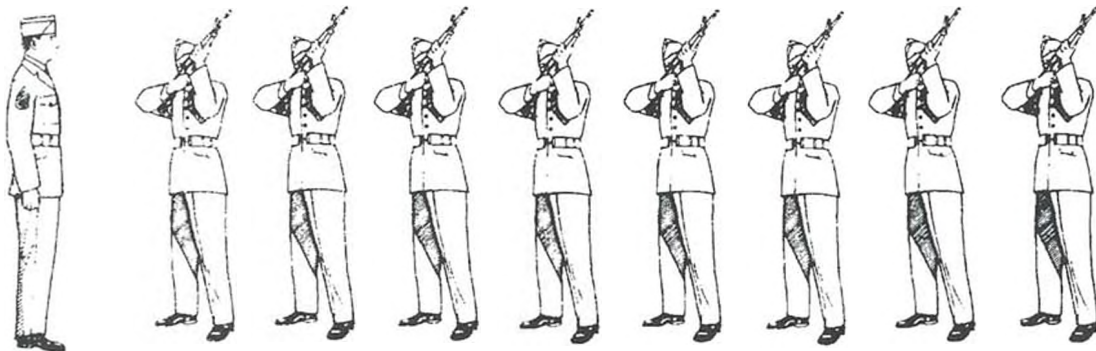
You'll watch surfside in Malibu, as high tide smacks
up against Ha Noi, Da Nang, My Lai, onto the sea wall
liberty fashioned to rise up without foundation.

You will be returned to the black and white,
to the good soldier. He will neither rally nor protest.

You will think you are really getting it. You will predict
the others will burn, in a theater absurd on the stage, their
collective draft cards. You will eat your popcorn with a fervor,
draw in the last sips of your Coke through a noisy straw, ready
for an upright conflict and a slowly satisfying denouement,
when

you will be fed this French existential finale, left there
a little dumbfounded, bushwhacked by all these warriors
lined up at the wall, only some of them graffiti in the art
of memoria, only some of them raised in credits at the end.

Andrea Zawinski, 76 So. Fourteenth St., Pittsburgh, PA 15203-1547.



BASIL T. PAQUET'S VIETNAM WAR POETRY AND THE AMERICAN FASCINATION WITH TECHNOLOGY

*for my brother Jerry who served as a medic in
Vietnam and Cambodia and returned*

Randy Fertel, Fertel Communications, 425 First St., Suite
8, New Orleans, LA 70130.

I remember the way a Phantom pilot had talked about how beautiful the surface-to-air missiles looked as they drifted up toward his plane to kill him, and remembered myself how lovely .50-caliber tracers could be, coming at you as you flew at night in a helicopter, how slow and graceful, arching up easily, a dream, so remote from anything that could harm you. It could make you feel a total serenity, an elevation that put you above death, but that never lasted very long.¹

In a manner typical of Vietnam war narrative, *Apocalypse Now* brilliantly explores the formative role of America's love affair with technology. Coppola's images are incisive: Colonel Kilgore of the Air Cav enamored of mastering a wave with the simple technology of a surfboard, and equally enamored of the "smell of napalm in the morning"; Playboy bunnies wielding revolvers and arriving by helicopter for a USO show; a border outpost with no CO but plenty of Christmas lights decorating a bridge constantly rebuilt amidst endless fire fights. We did not use the technology just because it was there: nothing is ever so simple. And yet America's love for tinkering, for small engines and large, and for 4th of July firecrackers is deeply implicated in what kept us there, and in our thinking that fire power would dislodge the Vietnamese from their century-old desire for freedom from colonial masters. Coppola is all the more brilliant for not merely condemning, aware that he himself is implicated, himself in love with the technology of cinematography and special effects, aware like his Kurtz that we are all Hollow Men. He gives us a glimpse of himself playing a director fecklessly moving men about on the beach, asking them to be natural, to do their jobs. In the post-Vietnam era this gesture of self-implication is the crucial gesture for us all, veterans and non-veterans alike.

For Coppola, who did not serve, strikes exactly the chord that many war veterans strike, the same ambivalent love-hate, attraction-repulsion. Basil Paquet's slim but well-honed poetic output is a case in point. And as with Coppola, Paquet's love affair with technology — not only military but also poetic and medical — is deeply implicated in his experience and in his assessment of America's war effort. His "Morning — A Death," first published in the *New York Review of Books* and reprinted in *Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems of Vietnam Veterans*,² is his most thorough treatment of these themes and his best poem, and it merits the extensive attention I wish here to pay it.

His love/hate affair with technology also permeates his lesser poems in that volume, however, and a look at them will serve to introduce his masterpiece. Paquet saturates "It Is Monsoon At Last" for example in the language of army materiel, suggesting how caught up soldiers were in the constant flow of arms and men, here drowning out the red dawn with which the poem opens:

The black peak of Xuan Loc
pulls a red apron of light
up from the east.
105's and 155's are walking shells
toward us from Bear Cat
down some trail
washing a trail in fire. (WHAM: 56)

Despite nature's luxury and despite the frightening fire power all around him, the medic must continue his gruesome chores. At the climax of the poem we realize that the poem's speaker uses the war, its events and its language, to keep his mind off war's consequences — the dead and dying. After hearing of "the whoosh and thud of B-40's" and "the quick flat answer of 16's" and seeing "Gunships . . . going up /sucking devil dusters into the air," we finally see the speaker's immediate setting:

We can see [the gunships] through the morgue door
against the red froth clouds
hanging over Xuan Loc.
We lift the boy into a death bag.
We lift the boy into the racks.
We are building a bunker of dead
We are stacking the dead for protection.
This dead boy is on my hands
My thighs are wet with the vomit of death
His blood is on my mouth
My mouth My mouth tastes his blood.
(WHAM: 56-7).

Paquet shifts from the metaphoric, highly-charged treatment of the war going on around him to the dull, exhausted anaphora of "We . . . We . . . We . . . We . . .," and to the pointedly unmetaphoric, crashing anticlimax of the last four lines, especially: "His blood is on my mouth/ My mouth My mouth tastes his blood." Repetition alone can express the dull horror of his repetitive task. And just as he begins to lose his grip on sanity, so too punctuation breaks down ("My mouth My mouth..."). Paquet then returns to recount "gunships . . . firing over the Dong Nai," as if technology and fire power were the only things to take his mind off the raw stuff, as if 4th of July fireworks were not a celebration of freedoms gained but rather just meant to make us forget the freedoms we lack. Although in Paquet's poetry technology attracts and repulses, excites and exhausts, describing it calls forth the poet's richest metaphorical language. "Christmas '67" is an ironic series of similes and metaphors where the images of Christmas take on a demonic character:

Flares lit the night like a sky
Full of Bethlehem stars.
Dark wings against a darker sky
Laid down red ribbons and bars
Of bright crashing metal

To warn of the on-coming
 Assault of men, the long battle
 Filled with cries of "in-coming,"
 That sent them crawling about
 Into the pocked earth, waiting for the promise
 Of thudding hosannas, like a gathering of devout
 Moths, aching for the flames, but frozen by the hiss
 And whistle of mortars and rockets sliding
 Down their air pews in a choring of dying.
 (WHAM: 36)

Here soldiers ironically assume the magi's role, looking toward "Flares . . . like . . . Bethlehem stars" that will light their way not to a Christ child but rather to the enemy. "Dark wings" don't sit "brooding" like Milton's dove over the act of creation, nor do they bear Gabriel's annunciation: instead these A-4 attack planes lay "down red ribbons and bars of bright crashing metal" which in turn darkly mimic the tinsel and streamers of the Christmas tree. "Cries of 'in-coming'" again travesty Gabriel's annunciation. Soldiers instead await not their Savior but rather "the promise of thudding hosannas," the exploding shells that are prayers not of heavenly hosts praising the almighty, but are merely "like a gathering of devout/Moths" drawn by their fascination with power. War's might travesties the religious symbolism that travesty drains of all meaning. His final image ("by the hiss / And whistle of mortars and rockets sliding / Down their air pews in a choring of dying") echoes Wilfred Owen's poem that wonders where we will find consolation for such grim and pointless deaths:

What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?
 Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
 Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
 Can patter out their hasty orisons.
 No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,
 Nor any voice of mourning save the *choirs*.—
 The shrill, *demented choirs of wailing shells*;
 And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

("Anthem for Doomed Youth"; my emphasis)

This brief look at Paquet's lesser poems suggests that what was said in condescending praise of the WHAM volume does not neatly apply:

This is plain, nervous verse. . . . Metaphor is rarely attempted, all elegance is forsworn, the meaning is terribly unmistakable. Clearly, Wilfred Owen's meters and images will not do for the veterans of this war...³

Although rich like the other poems in the volume, and like much Vietnam War poetry, in unpretty, raw experience, Paquet's poetry is more sophisticated and more demanding. Paquet for one thing is aware of poetic tradition, as the echo of Owen above makes clear. "Christmas '67" for example does not have the pentameters (nor, surely, the courtly love), but it does have the rhyme scheme of a sonnet. "They Do Not Go Gentle" is filled with raw horror, but it gets much of its force from the ironic allusion to Dylan Thomas's famous villanelle. Paquet's poem follows in full:

They Do Not Go Gentle

The half-dead comatose
 Paw the air like cats do when they dream,
 They perform isometrics tirelessly.
 They flail the air with a vengeance
 You know they cannot have.
 After all, their multiplication tables,
 Memories of momma, and half their id
 Lies in some shell hole
 Or plop! splatter! on your jungle boots.
 It must be some atavistic angst
 Of their muscle and bones,
 Some ancient ritual of their seawater self,
 Some blood stream monsoon,
 Some sinew storm that makes
 Their bodies rage on tastelessly
 Without their shattered brains.

Paquet is no Wilfred Owen. At his worst there is much of the mere undergraduate English major in his verse. But compared with the Michael Caseys who got all the publicity during the war, Paquet is a veritable Keats, loading every rift with ore. Although recent surveys of Vietnam war literature have given him only passing mention, he deserves our attention and respect. Most important, his "Morning — A Death" accomplishes exactly what one critic, Jeffrey Walsh, rightly seeks, but wrongly finds wanting in the poetry that came out of the war:

an available artistic mode of a sustained kind, an extended formal utterance or discourse in which the war's distinctive technical nature as well as its moral nature can be realized.⁴

Unquestionably his best poem, "Morning — A Death" is Paquet's richest and most personal and profound treatment of his love-hate relationship with technology. The technology involved here, as we shall see, is his own as medic: the technology of medicine. But, as in "Christmas '67," the love-hate plays out also in terms of poetic technique. Although the poem cultivates the appearance of direct unmediated effusion, in fact it is formally mediated by the ode: Paquet signalizes his genre by naming his three stanzas "Turn," "Counterturn," and "Stand"; he further exploits odic conventions in the poem's sometimes dense and difficult metaphors, its sometimes exalted diction, its quick transitions. In one of the poem's significant shifts from the ode tradition, Paquet employs not one lyric voice but two: the "Turn" and "Stand," both subtitled "Character 1," are the unspoken thoughts of the medic, the "Counterturn — Character 2" those of the soldier he tries in vain to resuscitate. But the most important aspect of its generic affiliation is a matter of absence: in this ode there are no heroes left to praise, no victorious Olympic athletes, no Cromwells returning from a pacified Ireland, not even innocent "Best Philosopher[s]." Only a frustrated medic and a victimized nineteen year old, shot "running [his] ass off" remain. At once dark comedy, bitter melodrama, and bleak tragedy, "Morning — A Death" is above all an ironic ode.⁵

The poem in its entirety follows:

Morning — A Death ⁶

Turn — Character 1

I've blown up your chest for thirty minutes
 And crushed it down an equal time,
 And still you won't warm to my kisses.
 I've sucked and puffed on your
 Metal No. 8 throat for so long, 5
 And twice you've moaned under my thrusts
 On your breastbone. I've worn off
 Those sparse hairs you've counted noble on your chest,
 And twice you defibrillated,
 And twice blew back my breath. 10
 I've scanned the rhythms of your living,
 Forced half-rhymes in your silent pulse,
 Sprung brief spondees in your lungs,
 And the cesura's called mid-line, half-time,
 Incomplete, but with a certain finality. 15
 The bullet barks apocalyptic
 And you don't unzip your sepulchral
 Canvas bag in three days.
 No rearticulation of nucleics, no phoenix,
 No novae, just an arbitrary of one-way bangs 20
 Flowing out to interstitial calms.
 The required canonical wait for demotion
 To lower order, and you wash out pure chemical.
 You are dead just as finally
 As your mucosity dries on my lips 25
 In this morning sun.
 I have thumped and blown into your kind too often,
 I grow tired of kissing the dead.

Counterturn — Character 2

I'd sooner be a fallen pine cone this winter
 In a cradle of cold New England rock, 30
 Less hurt in it than nineteen years.
 What an exit! Stage left, fronds waving,
 Cut down running my ass off at a tree line.
 I'm thinking, as I hear my chest
 Sucking air through its brand new nipple, 35
 I bought the ticket, I hope I drown fast, The pain is all
 in living.

Stand — Character 1

I grow tired of jostled litters
 Filling the racks, and taking off
 Your tags and rings, pulling out 40
 Your metal throats and washing
 Your spittle down with warm beer at night,
 So tired of tucking you all in,
 And smelling you all on me for hours. 45
 I'd sooner be in New England this winter
 With pine pitch on my hands than your blood,
 Lightly fondling breasts and kissing
 Women's warm mouths than thumping
 Your shattered chests and huffing
 In your broken lips or aluminum windpipes, 50
 Sooner lift a straying hair from her wet mouth
 Than a tear of elephant grass from your slack lips.
 I'd so much rather be making children,
 Than tucking so many in.

The multiple ironies of the text begin with the title: this morning does not bring rebirth, renewal, but rather death. Too, the pun on "mourning" introduces the burden of the poem, the burden war poets at least since Wilfred Owen have shouldered: how do we sing anthems to men "who die as cattle"? What consolation is there for deaths not in a just cause nor outwardly heroic? How write poetry of encomium for the undignified dead?

With Owen, Paquet first of all believes "The Poetry is in the Pity." Like Owen, Paquet describes in the first ten lines an intimacy between comrades that reaches homoerotic dimensions. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the attempt to revive and to save, is a lovemaking. The intimacy promotes empathy: the medic recognizes the pride in "Those sparse hairs you counted noble on your chest." Ironically though, the love affair is a brutal one: the verbs are not only extremely violent; they also mimic the plosive cacophony of the bullets that brought the youth to this love nest — "I've blown up your chest. . . /And crushed it down. . . ." "I've sucked" also looks forward to what we learn of the boy's experience of his wound in the Counterturn: "I hear my chest /Sucking air through its brand new nipple. . . ." "Metal No. 8" — a tracheotomy device the medic has installed — coldly replaces this third nipple the bullet so warmly and instantaneously created. Pathology and cure, distance and intimacy, hate and love jumble together in this tragic love.

The diction of the next passage reflects the same hot/cold tensions. Here the clinical language of academic prosody expresses the life-and-death struggle medic and patient undergo:

I've scanned the rhythms of your living,
 Forced half-rhymes in your silent pulse.
 Sprung brief spondees in your lungs,
 And the cesura's called mid-line, half-time.
 Incomplete, but with a certain finality.

This dense conceit needs some unpacking. The medic takes the pulse ("scanned the rhythms of your living"); tries through chest massage to make one heart-beat rhyme with the last ("forced half-rhymes in your silent pulse"); and blows by twos to fill the lungs: "Sprung brief spondees in your lungs." The allusion to G.M. Hopkins' prosodic method in "Sprung" suggests the medic is trying to infuse the patient with the landscape Hopkins' heavily stressed poetry tried to capture. Finally however, all comes to naught: some external force has "called" a caesura or pause to the boy's life functions. The boy is dead. The caesura is "incomplete" because, with almost hairsplitting linguistic accuracy, a pause does not truly exist if the activity does not recommence; with a bitter irony, the caesura has nevertheless "a certain ['kind of,'] but with a pun on 'definite'] finality": it's not a pause but the end.

Narratively, the passage merely repeats the opening; in terms of action, it is merely an elegant variation. Yet the repetition at least suggests the tiresome repetitions

CPR demands. Furthermore, the diction's tonality and texture reflects the love/hate relationship the medic suffers. At once the language of prosodic science conveys distance and intimacy: it smells of the lamp, yet, like Coppola's big budget special effects, it suggests the poet-medic will try anything to express this experience — and to revive this boy. Paquet's metaphoric contortions, perhaps not completely felicitous, nevertheless reflect, by an "answerable style," the emotional contortions the medic undergoes.

Scientific terminology — whether from medicine, prosody, or, as in the following, the hard sciences — is the only exalted diction this ode about a technological war has left to exploit:

The bullet barks apocalyptic
And you don't unzip your sepulchral
Canvas bag in three days.
No rearticulation of nucleics, no phoenix,
No novae, just an arbitrary of one-way bangs
Flowing out to interstitial calms.
The required canonical wait for demotion
To lower order, and you wash out pure chemical.

The dignity of religious language and myth, it is true, intrudes upon the scientific conceit of the passage, but only negatively: this Christ's "sepulchral /Canvas bag" will not "unzip . . . in three days." Scientific diction carries the day, repeating the ironies of the Christian allusion and of the failed promise of the title. The boy's DNA "nucleics" will not find expression in future generations; he will achieve no "phoenix" rebirth from his ashes. Nor will he be a new star; rather, this "big-bang" birth (the echoes of the wound and of the love act are intensely bitter) is a death, a "one-way" scattering of atoms "to interstitial calms" with no hope, unlike our cosmos, of return. Religious language seems again to assert itself ("canonical . . . lower order"), but the religious connotations are drowned out by military language and rule: the body must wait for its plane home; the demotion is from cannon fodder to KIA, a number on the wrong side of the ledger of attrition. The science of death finally again rules: "you wash out pure chemical."

Although in the cinematic flashback of the "Counterturn" Paquet allows the boy his own voice to recount his wounding, the medic's "Turn" ends with the boy's death:

You are dead just as finally
As your mucosity dries on my lips
In this morning sun.
I have thumped and blown into your kind too often,
I grow tired of kissing the dead.

Here the quiet tone of frustration and pity is borne piteously to us by the cold, ugly accuracy of "mucosity" drying on his lips, by the richer and now doubled irony of "this morning sun" (doubled because of the pun on "son"), and by the bitter intimacy of the unbearable last lines.

The passage so brilliantly sums up the "Turn" that Paquet could easily have ended the poem here, if he had

not had further ironies to jolt us with. I have said that medic and patient undergo a life-and-death struggle; but the irony the "Counterturn" introduces is that they have not been struggling mutually, together, but rather against one another. Quoted in full, Paquet's "Counterturn — Character 2" follows:

I'd sooner be a fallen pine cone this winter
In a cradle of cold New England rock,
Less hurt in it than nineteen years.
What an exit! Stage left, fronds waving,
Cut down running my ass off at a tree line.
I'm thinking, as I hear my chest
Sucking air through its brand new nipple,
I bought the ticket, I hope I drown fast,
The pain is all in living.

In the only duologue of the ode tradition that I know of, Paquet here literalizes the ode's conventional dialectic process: the "Counterturn" turns with a bitter twist. For by indirection we learn that *savior* is *enemy*. Although we sympathized throughout the "Turn" with the medic for his selfless efforts, here medic becomes mercenary, puppet to an army that would at all cost save the numbers in its attritional war, because only if the numbers are right does the money come. With such hard facts forced upon us, we are led by the poem to the hard question: has not this boy the right to die, to "drown fast" if "The pain is all in living"? A brutal question, but a question many medics must have asked themselves as they "healed" — etymologically the word means "make whole" — victims of Claymores and SKS semi-automatic rifles: future mutes, future paraplegics, future vegetables. Indirectly, then, the "Counterturn" calls the medic's seemingly heroic efforts in question. Even this poem about a healer and noncombatant (and autobiographically, a conscientious objector) exemplifies what the editors of *Winning Hearts and Minds* argued "distinguishes the voices of this volume": "their progression toward an active identification of themselves as agents of pain and war — as 'agent-victims' of their own atrocities" (p. v).

'Of course the "Counterturn" not only undermines the would-be nobility of the medic; more directly it attacks the war. What kind of experience is it, what kind of war, would make a nineteen year old, priding himself so recently upon his chest hairs, now so ready to yield his all? Following upon the loving portrait of the turn, the boy's pastoral yearnings (29-30), his honest appraisal of his unheroic wound (32-3), and finally his willingness (36-7) as it were to "go gentle into that good night" further endear him to us. His death, his loss of pride, the stupidity of a situation, reminiscent of Hardy's "Drummer Hodge," where palm fronds wave above a boy born to pine nettles each promote our anger at the war. The palm fronds echo those which met Christ entering Jerusalem and hence force upon us the full significance of what we learned before, that there will be no resurrection.⁸ As for Owen so for Paquet: the lads who die are Christs stupidly slaughtered, whose rebirth is denied them by the insignificance of their deaths.

Is there consolation for such stupid, unnatural, and useless deaths? Since even the medic's efforts are questioned, is there anything for this ode to praise? The "Stand" suggests an answer to these questions, hinting at a mysterious affirmation. In the main, the stanza, which returns to the medic's interior voice, re-expresses the ever-deepening sense of frustration at the futility and the senselessness of so much loss. But embedded at the stanza's center, the echo of the boy's words suggests a union between these combatants that dignifies their admittedly futile lives and deaths:

I grow tired of jostled litters
 Filling the racks, and taking off
 Your tags and rings, pulling out
 Your metal throats and washing
 Your spittle down with warm beer at night,
 So tired of tucking you all in,
 And smelling you all on me for hours.
 I'd sooner be in New England this winter
 With pine pitch on my hands than your blood, . . .

The horror of the imagery is the leading note here: like so much hung meat the "litters" fill "the racks"; the drying "mucosity" of the "Turn" is now the homelier but even more wrenching image of "spittle" washed down "with warm beer." But underneath this horror is the positive note we, not the medic, can hear, a note of empathy evidenced by the reechoing of the boy's words. Where the boy would

rather be a fallen pine cone this winter
 In a cradle of cold New England rock,
 so, too, the medic would
 sooner be in New England this winter
 With pinepitch on my hands than your blood.

Their respective yearnings are in character: the boy who will have no rebirth, no "rearticulation of nucleics," will still have none when he, as seed-bearing pine cone, falls on fallow ground "In a cradle of cold New England rock"; the medic, frustrated by the futility of his manual labors, wishes only for further, but pettier, frustrations: "pine pitch on my hands," the blood of trees, not boys. Yet though separated by these idiosyncrasies, by what Pater called "the thick wall of personality," and now separated by death, nevertheless they are one. Not only do they share yearnings: for peace, for pastoral quiet, for at least a lessening of the pain, the humiliation, the absurdity. Faced with the artificial, technological absurdities of the war, they both seem to say, I prefer at least a natural, honest absurdity.

So much explicates the echoes, but how do we explain them? We can explain them as accidental — e.g., their common birthplace. Or, stepping back from the poem, we can explain them as authorial manipulation. But what Paquet gets at by his manipulation defies rational explanation. He dramatizes a preternatural causality: breathing into the boy and receiving the breaths the boy has "twice" blown "back," the medic echoes the boy and the boy the medic because they have

inspired one another. The pun is clumsier verbally than dramatically. Paquet again literalizes the ode, here the odic convention of treating the nature and source of poetic inspiration. The literalization is at once darkly comic — this is inspiration? — and the slender and tragic grounds for praise: this is inspiration, however brutal, however short-lived. In sum, Paquet would have us consider that camaraderie which so many veterans from so many wars have affirmed the only thing of value in their war experience. Like so many others, especially the Owen of "Strange Meeting" and the Whitman of *Drum Taps*, but by a poetic narrative and technique quite his own, Paquet renders the union in mystical terms. Although rationally unaware of this mystical union, the medic intuitively reaps its benefits, a now quieter, no longer violence-marred pity. He would "sooner be," he continues,

Lightly fondling breasts and kissing
 Women's warm mouths than thumping
 Your shattered chests and huffing
 In your broken lips or aluminum windpipes,
 Sooner lift a straying hair from her wet mouth
 Than a tear of elephant grass from your slack lips
 I'd so much rather be making children,
 Than tucking so many in.

The bitter ironies and tragic absurdities certainly do not end. War's logic constrains the medic to continue in his frustrated, perhaps misdirected, labors. But here the violence ("thumping . . . huffing") is recognized for what it is: the fruitless homoeroticism is seen in the larger perspective of sexuality that may one day bear fruit. Though co-opted (as we used to say) by the war machine and dehumanized by his labors and the technology he employs, the medic affirms humanness, as affirmation informed, even inspired by, the union he has unknowingly experienced.

In the main bitterly ironic, "Morning — A Death" celebrates the sharing which technology has no intrinsic part in but which war itself promotes and intensifies. The deaths are stupid, the lives are stupid, attempts to sustain the lives are stupid — if only because the injuries are unnecessary. Technology is endlessly lethal and endlessly fascinating, and yet in "Morning — A Death" it gets left behind: the things that matter, relationships, are man-made, but they are not tangible, are not made of lead, plastic, or sheet metal. War creates friendships even over the rim of death which are intense and, in the experience, meaningful — whether rationally explicable or not. Like Coppola who went on to make the more lyrical and technically spare S.E. Hinton trilogy, Paquet seems to have left behind him in Southeast Asia and in his poetry his moth-like fascination with fire power and technology. Seeking to avoid the violent expression of his anger at the United States government, he tells me, he left the country for Trinidad in 1973. After five years on that island and on Jamaica, he lives now with his wife and two children, not in his native New England, but beneath the palms in Miami. I wish him well.

NOTES

¹ Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Knopf, 1977). Many thanks to my students in Introduction to Poetry at Le Moyne College in 1984-85 whose strong response to the poem helped to inspire this essay. Thanks too to my former English Department colleagues and to Luther Luedtke and Jim Matthews, all of whom read and responded to early drafts. A special thanks to Dr. R.C. Llewellyn for help with the poetry's medical technology.

² Larry Rottmann, Jan Barry and Basil T. Paquet, eds., *Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans*, hereafter referred to as *WHAM* (1972, reprint: New York, McGraw Hill, 1972): 22-3; *New York Review of Books*, 18 Dec 1969:8.

³ Peter S. Prescott, review of *Winning Hearts and Minds* and *Obscenities* by Michael Casey; *Newsweek*, 12 June 1972: 103-4. The volume is praised in much the same terms, for the poets' achievement of a "visual immediacy that comes from experience," by Deborah H. Holdstein in "Vietnam War Veteran-Poets: The Ideology of Horror." Many thanks to Dr. Holdstein for a copy of an early draft of her paper which I first heard at a Special Session of the MLA Convention, New York, 29 Dec 1981.

⁴ Jeffrey Walsh, *American War Literature: 1914 to Vietnam* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982): 204. Walsh finds these qualities only in Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, a book whose fascination with technology bears comparison with Paquet's as my epigraph suggests. Herr, of course, wrote the narration for *Apocalypse Now*. While Walsh misses exactly what I will argue "Morning—A Death" has to offer, he does write that "Morning—A Death" is among the few in *WHAM* where "the war seems actualized, made urgent through its particularity" (204). Philip D. Beidler also falls short in his appreciation of Paquet's stature, noting only Paquet's "Night Dust-off" with its "elaborate kind of art-speech, a distracting hodgepodge of fractured syntax and strange figurative ellipsis... enigmatic in its artifice," in *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982): 76-77.

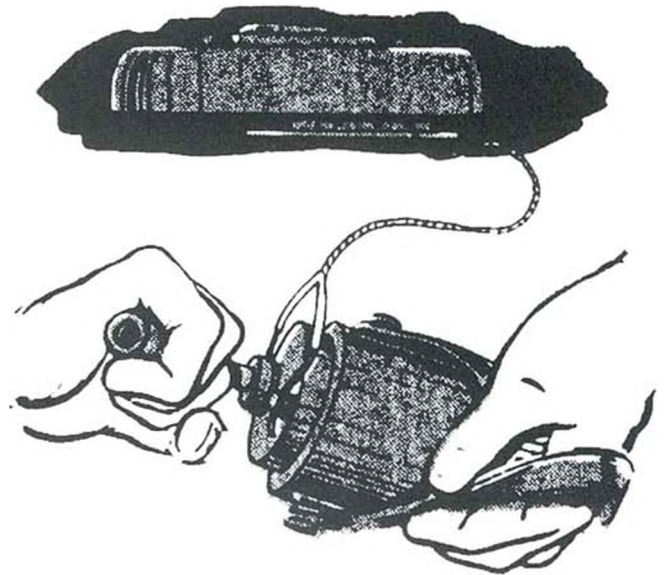
⁵ Paquet's is certainly not the first ironic ode: Allen Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead" (1928), because it treats the problem of honoring soldiers killed fighting in an unjust cause, is the best analog to Paquet's. According to Paul H. Fry, however, in *The Poet's Calling in the English Ode* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), all the great odes since Jonson are ironic, all invoking a presence whose value originates in the poet, not the presence itself: Keats puts his "Nightingale and Urn" behind him, Wordsworth his "Best Philosopher." So much is true. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that such odes achieve their ironic effect by playing against the audience's expectation that praise will be forthcoming. The ode tradition is then paradoxically one whose greatest examples do not praise, yet whose central trope in encomium. Fry provides a fine bibliography on the ode: 279n. On the process of playing against generic expectation, see E.D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

⁶ Reprinted with permission from *New York Review of Books*, copyright 1969, NYREV. I have silently emended typographical errors in the *Winning Hearts and Minds* text, following the text of the *New York Review of Books*. They are: "phoenix (1.19—*WHAM* has "pheonix"); "clams," (1.21—*WHAM* has a

period); and "lips," (1.52—*WHAM* omits the period). The NYREV text differs in other minor ways which I do not follow.

⁷ C. Day Lewis, ed., *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen* (New York: New Directions, 1963): 31. My debt in the following passage, as throughout this essay, to Paul Fussell's seminal *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975) is, no doubt, obvious.

⁸ I owe this point to my student at LeMoyne College, David Ballawender.



THE HELICOPTER ROAD TO VIETNAM

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Rotary-wing aircraft were an ubiquitous component of the Vietnam War. From the beginning, with obsolete Korean War helicopters carrying ARVN troops into battle, to Huey gunships evacuating wounded at Ia Drang in 1965, to giant transport helicopters evacuating the Americans from Saigon rooftops in 1975; from the war's reality to its subsequent representations in popular culture, the sights and sounds of helicopters were as integral aspects of the war as the men who fought it. This article describes how helicopters came to occupy a central part of the U. S. arsenal in Vietnam.

In 1909, a young second lieutenant at the Marine Corps Officer's School at Parris Island wrote a thesis which reflected an early appreciation of the role of air power in military strategy. "Aviation, the Cavalry of the Future" by A. A. Vandegrift was evaluated as "unsatisfactory."¹ Vandegrift would eventually become Commandant of the Marine Corps; his idea would evolve to define a major component of U. S. strategy and tactics in the Vietnam War.

The Versailles treaty which ended World War I mandated the transfer of formerly German islands in the Pacific Ocean to Japan. By 1921 both Marine and Navy planners began to think in terms of a future Pacific war against the Japanese Empire. These planners correctly understood that the key to victory over Japan would be based upon the development and application of a strategy of amphibious assault.

By June 1945, the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific had proved successful in defeating the Japanese. In June and July the Marine Corps was rehearsing plans for an invasion of Japan proper. In August, the spectacular atomic explosions of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the war. This use of atomic weapons also blew apart any rigidity the Marine Corps may have had concerning the application of its existing doctrine in the post-World War II era.

Marine Lieutenant General Roy S. Geiger, Commanding General of the Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, viewed the 1946 atomic bomb tests at Bikini as the Commandant's personal representative. Geiger had commanded the Marine amphibious force which took part in the amphibious invasion of Okinawa. After Bikini, Geiger reported to his superiors that probable future enemies of the United States would be in possession of atomic weapons, a small number of which could destroy expeditionary forces such as had been used against Japan in the Pacific. Geiger urged the Commandant to consider the future use of atomic weapons as a very serious and urgent matter. According to Geiger, the Marine Corps must find the means to develop techniques for conducting amphibious operations in the atomic age.²

The destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons against massed amphibious landing forces made dispersion a necessity. Dispersion, however, contained the seeds of defeat through gradual commitment of forces

ashore. The task was to disperse landing forces to minimize providing targets for nuclear attacks while retaining the ability to reconcentrate these forces at the point of contact with the enemy. Transport aircraft, gliders, paratroops, and troop carrying submarines were all considered. In the end, the Marine Corps decided that helicopters would be the major assault vehicle of the future.³

By December 1946, Commandant Vandegrift began communications with the Navy in what was the first service document known to propose the use of helicopters as a tactical vehicle for the transport of combat troops from naval vessels to landing areas ashore. This Vertical Assault Concept for Amphibious Operations offered a relatively unlimited choice of landing areas. The maneuverability of helicopters provided a means for rapid evacuation of casualties, for the transport of supplies from logistic areas to the depots ashore, and the ability to provide troops for continued land operations.

The 1950 attack by North Korea against South Korea forced a change in Marine Corps plans to integrate the helicopter into its tactical forces. Existing timetables would be revised to expedite this integration. Four helicopters accompanied the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade from the United States to Korea. The Marines were rushed to the battles of the Pusan Perimeter, reinforcing U. S. Army and South Korean troops. The brigade maneuvered rapidly and repeatedly counterattacked the North Korean penetration of the perimeter. These mobile operations quickly proved the value of helicopters in warfare. The Marine helicopter squadron was used for liaison, reconnaissance, medical evacuation of wounded, rescue of downed Marine aviators in enemy territory, observation, messenger service, supply of positions on dominant terrain features, and re-supply of units by air.

The brigade commander, General Edward A. Craig, called for more helicopters, including large transport helicopters. Craig, anticipating future airmobile tactics in Vietnam, claimed that the mountainous terrain of Korea presented a difficult problem for security of flank and rear areas. Troop-carrying helicopters would be an ideal means to place patrols on high terrain which would take hours to climb and would exhaust the troops. These vehicles, Craig suggested, would contribute significantly to the effectiveness and security of Marine operations in Korea and insure a more rapid defeat of the enemy.⁴

As early as 1951 the Marine Corps experimented with outfitting assault helicopters with 2.75 inch rockets and machine guns. By 1953 the Marine Corps claimed more experience in helicopter operations, possessed more helicopters, trained pilots, and crewmen than any other military organization in the world.⁵ However, with its own organic air force to provide close air support for troops in the field, the Marines would lag behind the Army in the development of helicopter gunships.

Based upon the positive experience of the Marines in Korea, the U.S. Army formed twelve helicopter battalions in 1952. The prospect of nuclear weapons on the battlefield drove the Army's implementation of the use of helicopters just as it had the Marines. In 1954, Major General James M. Gavin, Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, noted that nuclear weapons, if used in future

wars, would be used against land forces. The only practical counter-measure against such weapons is to drastically reduce the concentration of soldiers in the battle zone. Since fewer soldiers will have to cover more ground, there will exist a greater need for automatic weapons and for a rapid logistics system to provide them with ammunition. A defense based on dispersion necessitates developing a methodology to rapidly consolidate forces in the field. Air vehicles, including helicopters, were deemed the appropriate mechanisms to accomplish these goals.⁶ By 1955 the use of helicopters for troop transport and logistics had achieved limited success within the Army.⁷

Under General Gavin, the position of director of Army aviation was established and filled from 1955 to 1958 by General Hamilton Howze. Tests were conducted by Howze to determine the efficacy of the airmobile concept within the context of the Army's NATO commitments. When an air cavalry brigade was substituted for a U. S. armored division, the air cavalry was superior to armor in holding off Soviet units in West Germany. The army concluded that light forces with high mobility could apply firepower better than standard infantry divisions, and that the requirements for small wars appeared to be much the same as for nuclear wars against the Soviet Union.⁸

By late 1961, the GVN was not faring well against the Viet Cong insurgency. To meet the increasing Communist menace to the Diem regime, U. S. President John Kennedy sent retired Army General Maxwell D. Taylor to Vietnam to explore what could be done to save South Vietnam. Taylor arrived in Saigon in October 1961. The following month recommendations were made to assist the GVN. One of the most important was the recommendation that three squadrons of Army helicopters be sent to Vietnam to increase the mobility of the ARVN. By getting South Vietnamese forces out of their static defense positions, the GVN would be better able to meet the Viet Cong threat to the rural population. This recommendation was approved by President Kennedy.

In September 1961 fifteen HU-1 "Huey" helicopter gunships were deployed to Vietnam for evaluation as to their utility in counterinsurgency operations. The head of the evaluation team, Army Brigadier General Edward Rowley, said his mission was to find ways to better "find and fix" guerrillas.⁹ By early 1962 the increased support by the U. S. to the GVN began to yield positive results. A major factor in this shift was the deployment of thirty-three H-21 helicopters, which first brought the concept of airmobility to South Vietnam. These helicopters, used solely for transporting ARVN troops to the battlefield, gave the ARVN the ability to surprise the Viet Cong in their base areas. Initially, the Viet Cong were terrorized by these mobile operations, and large numbers of Viet Cong were killed as they attempted to flee the strike area.¹⁰

Over time, the Viet Cong developed counter measures which reduced the efficacy of helicopter operations. In January 1963 the previously elusive VC chose to stand and fight the ARVN and their U.S. advisors. At Ap Bac the VC constructed fortified positions in the tree lines. Fox-holes were dug deep enough for soldiers to stand up

inside. Machine guns and automatic rifles were positioned to achieve interlocking fields of fire. VC officers instructed their forces for many months in anti-helicopter tactics. Pamphlets were distributed which explained how VC gunners were to lead American aircraft based on the angle of approach and airspeed. The idea was to shoot ahead of the target so the aircraft would fly into a hail of bullets. Cardboard models of H-21s, Hueys, and fixed-wing airplanes were pulled along a string between poles to simulate aircraft in flight. Fire discipline was emphasized as massed fires offered the most effective means of putting sufficient rounds into an aircraft to disable it.

Ten H-21 transports, with five HU-1 Huey gunships in escort, landed in rice paddies near Ap Bac on January 2. The Viet Cong put their new tactics to good effect; in five minutes they took down four helicopters and damaged another sufficiently to force it to land in a nearby rice paddy. The guerrillas hit every helicopter out of the fifteen sent to Ap Bac except for one gunship.¹¹

The first Marine helicopter unit to deploy to Vietnam arrived on April 15, 1962. The former Japanese fighter airstrip at Soc Trang in Ba Xuyen Province in the Mekong Delta was the Marine base of operations. Their mission, named Operation SHU-FLY, was to haul ARVN supplies and troops in support of operations against the Viet Cong. The squadron commander was Lieutenant Colonel Archie J. Clapp, a veteran of the Iwo Jima and Okinawa campaigns, the first carrier-based raid on Tokyo, and combat support helicopter missions in Korea.

The Marines decided not to arm their helicopters with machine guns as the Army had done. The Marines figured their best defense was to minimize the time spent on the landing zone. Machine guns would tend to block the cabin door, hindering troop egress. The crew chief could help the troops debark rather than man a machine gun. Instead, two submachine guns were carried aboard each helicopter. Seventeen Marine helicopters were damaged by enemy fire before the helicopter unit was relieved by another squadron in August.¹²

In addition to providing maneuverability on the nuclear battlefield, the concept of airmobility was attractive to the Army because of its ongoing dissatisfaction with the Air Force's close air support. The Army's response reflected the same thinking as that of the Marine Corps; create its own air force. This is a logical solution to problems inherent in a military establishment where one branch is the consumer of a service that another branch is responsible for providing. In 1950, Army aircraft totaled 725; by 1960, over 5,000; and by 1969 the Army had more aviation units than ground maneuver battalions.¹³

Relations between the Army and Air Force deteriorated in Vietnam. At the heart of the controversy was command and control of helicopters. The Army saw the conflict in Vietnam as primarily a ground battle. Airpower was a supporting element in the Army's task of locating and destroying enemy forces. As part of the ground forces, helicopters, like tanks and artillery, should be under the control of ground commanders.

Quite naturally, the Air Force held a different outlook. Its air doctrine was more comprehensive than that

of the Army and Marine Corps. Winning and maintaining air superiority is the first priority of Air Force tactical forces. Since counterair operations were not a factor in South Vietnam, the Air Force devoted between 75 and 90 percent of its tactical efforts to interdiction operations.¹⁴ Airmen maintain that airpower is a decisive element of war in its own right and not merely a supporting arm. In this view, the full effects of airpower can only be achieved when it is centrally controlled and not divided among Army, Navy, and Air Force commanders. The Air Force felt helicopters should be employed under the same tactical air control systems as other aircraft.

The Air Force noted in World War II and Korea the air commander decided whether enemy defenses in the assault area would permit the airborne operation to proceed. In these wars, an airman had control of airborne assault operations until the troops landed; thereafter, control passed to the ground commander. This system of control was not employed in South Vietnam.

Armed helicopters were limited to providing supporting fire for the ARVN up to one minute before a helicopter assault and continuing for only one minute after the last helicopters had left the landing zone. The guns aboard armed helicopters could only be used in defensive fire missions. Air Force personnel objected to cases where helicopters were thought to be providing close air support to South Vietnamese forces. Such support was felt by the Air Force to be its mission, not the Army's. Both the U. S. Army and Air Force sought control over American tactical aviation throughout the world, and remained at loggerheads over the issue until 1966. In that year the Army abandoned its future claims to new types of fixed-wing aircraft while the Air Force agreed that the Army would keep its rotary-wing assets.¹⁵

The Korean War forced the Marine Corps to change its strategic helicopter emphasis from the nuclear battlefield toward fighting Communist wars of national liberation. For the Army, the equivalent impetus was the Vietnam War. In the mid-1950's, under the direction of General Gavin, a study was prepared examining the feasibility of equipping the entire U. S. Army with helicopter units. The price of such a modernization was \$3 billion. The conclusions of the study were rejected by Army leadership as being too costly.

By the early 1960's, the Army had to prepare for low and mid-intensity conflicts in addition to maintaining preparedness for nuclear war. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara felt helicopters could solve the problems facing the U. S. in Vietnam. Since American and ARVN troop levels were insufficient to saturate Vietnam sufficiently in order to uproot the Viet Cong guerrillas, mobility and firepower provided by helicopters would prove compensatory. McNamara ordered the Army to re-examine its aviation requirements with a goal to significantly increasing the mobility of its forces. According to McNamara, the existing Army procurement program for helicopters was strung out over too many years.

In August 1962, the Army submitted a report in response to McNamara's directive. An air assault division with hundreds of helicopters was recommended for inclusion into the Army's force structure. The report also

called for the formation of an air cavalry brigade with 144 attack helicopters. If the Air Force was reluctant to provide the requisite fixed-wing close air support the Army felt it needed, then the Army would depend on helicopter gunships. After Vietnam, the Army had more pilots and aircraft than the Air Force.

The Air Force felt this emerging Army doctrine placed too great a reliance on helicopters. The Air Force preferred to increase ground force mobility primarily by using C-130 transport airplanes with fighter protection. Helicopters, being extremely vulnerable to enemy ground fire, should be employed under very restricted conditions. Consequently, only a small helicopter force should be developed.¹⁶

The Army formed the 11th Air Assault Division (Test) around several existing battalions to determine the utility of airmobility in mid- and high-intensity combat environments. This division was activated on 11 February 1964 at Fort Benning, Georgia, with Brigadier General Harry Kinnard as commander. Initial airmobility training was geared for individual, platoon, and company-sized units. By June of 1964 the Army added two additional brigades of infantry as well as artillery and other support units, and began testing battalion, brigade, and division tactics. In the fall of 1964, the 11th Air Assault Division successfully conducted the largest field exercises since World War II. Upon completion, the Pentagon began incorporating the Air Assault Division into the ranks of regular Army forces.¹⁷ At this time U.S. Army aircraft accounted for about half of all aircraft in South Vietnam.¹⁸

In early 1965, Communist forces in South Vietnam directed their attacks for the first time against U. S. installations. On 22 February, General William Westmoreland, commander of U. S. forces in Vietnam, requested the deployment of two Marine Corps battalions to defend the important Da Nang air base against enemy attack. By the end of March 1965, nearly 5,000 Marines were at Da Nang. This force included two helicopter squadrons.¹⁹

On 15 June 1965, Secretary McNamara authorized the formation of the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) from the 11th Air Assault (Test) Division. On 28 July President Johnson held a press conference to announce that the 1st Cavalry was being ordered to Vietnam due to the worsening situation in that country. Thereafter helicopters flooded into Southeast Asia; by the end of 1968, over 3,000 were on hand.²⁰

Issues of command and control of helicopters remained paramount throughout the war. Fixed wing aircraft would escort all heliborne assaults. Concentrated air attacks would be conducted prior to the assaults to suppress enemy ground fire. The Air Force felt the increased complexity of helicopter assaults as the war progressed necessitated greater centralization of control. This view was reinforced by the risks associated with increased volumes and lethality of enemy ground fire. These differences between the Army and Air Force over the proper role of helicopters in America's tactical aerial arsenal was again manifested in the 1971 ARVN invasion of Laos. Senior air commanders believed helicopters would be very vulnerable to high volumes of enemy

antiaircraft fire. Helicopters could only survive if deployed with large numbers of fighter-bombers to bomb and strafe the before and during heliborne operations.

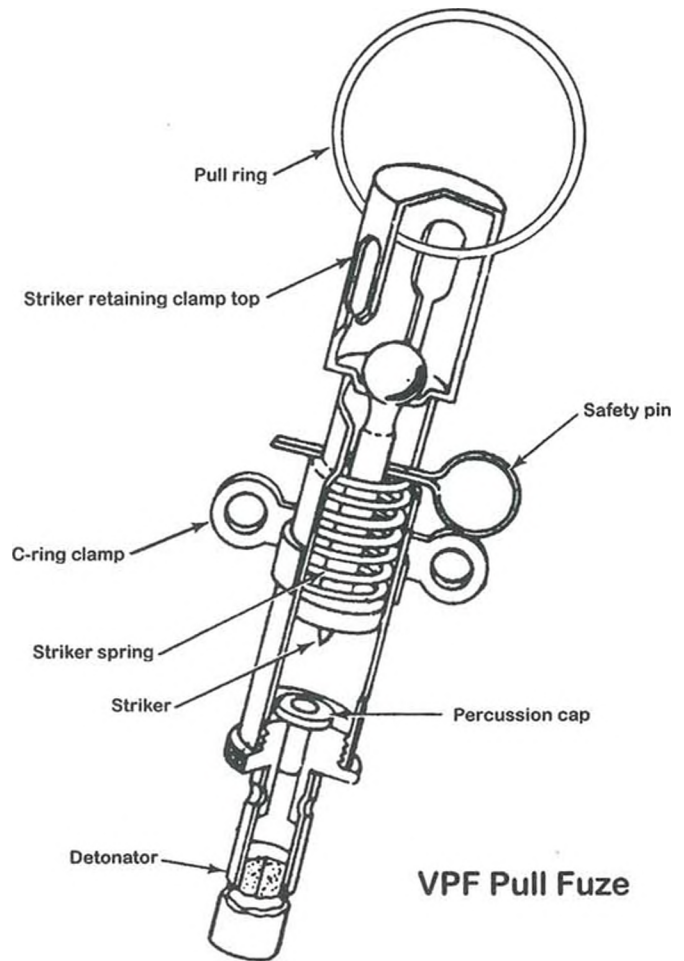
Based on their prior experiences in South Vietnam, the Army expected North Vietnamese antiaircraft fire to be less severe than predicted by the Air Force. Consequently, most of the fire support for the troop carrying helicopters during Lam Son 719 would be provided by Huey gunships; Air Force support would be limited. Army gunships were unable to effectively cope with the levels of firepower brought to bear against ARVN landing zones by the North Vietnamese. The Air Force estimated the losses of 200 of the over 600 helicopters used in the invasion of Laos.²¹

Although helicopters were originally incorporated into the American military establishment as a means to deal with the problems of the nuclear battlefield, in Vietnam, rotary-wing aircraft were initially deployed as counter-guerrilla vehicles. As the war turned conventional, hundreds of helicopters were integrated into America's emerging doctrine of airmobility. One million Americans would be carried into battle in Vietnam in helicopters.²² By the end of 1972, according to Pentagon figures, 4,857 helicopters were lost by the United States in Vietnam.²³ Even today the sound of helicopter rotors beating the air yields an enduring soundtrack of America's longest war.

NOTES

- ¹ A. A. Vandegrift and Robert B. Asprey, *Once A Marine*, (N.Y.: Ballantine Books, 1964): 63.
- ² LtCol Eugene W. Rawlins, *Marines and Helicopters, 1946-1962* (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1976): 8, 11.
- ³ Vandegrift: 322.
- ⁴ Rawlins: 42-43.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*: 62.
- ⁶ James M. Gavin, "Cavalry, and I Don't Mean Horses," *Harper's Magazine*, April, 1954: 60.
- ⁷ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1986): 113.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*: 114.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*: 120.
- ¹⁰ Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988): 294-300.
- ¹¹ Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie*, (N.Y.: Random House, 1988): 214-220.
- ¹² Archie J. Clapp, "Shu-Fly Diary," *U. S. Naval Institute Proceedings*, October, 1963: 42-53.
- ¹³ Krepinevich: 113-114. James A. Donovan, *Militarism, USA* (N.Y.: Scribner's Sons, 1970): 242.
- ¹⁴ William D. White, *U.S. Tactical Air Power*, (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1974): 62-63, 66 n.8.
- ¹⁵ Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, (N.Y.: The New Press, 1985): 181; Krepinevich: 121.
- ¹⁶ William W. Momyer, *Airpower in Three Wars*, (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Defense, Dept. of the Air Force, 1978): 249-250, 254.
- ¹⁷ Loren Baritz, *Backfire*, (N.Y.: Ballantine, 1985): 247-248; Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once...And Young*, (N.Y.: HarperPerennial, 1993): 11-13; Krepinevich: 113-126.

- ¹⁸ Momyer: 264.
- ¹⁹ Jack Shulimson and Edward F. Wells, "First In, First Out, The Marine Experience in Vietnam" *Marine Corps Gazette*, January, 1984: 37.
- ²⁰ William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976): 205.
- ²¹ Army estimates were lower. Momyer: 324.
- ²² Moore: 406.
- ²³ Kolko: 190.



CANONICITY

A NEW COLUMN AND A CALL FOR INPUT

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With this issue of *Viet Nam Generation*, I am pleased to begin regular work on a section exploring *canonicity* and the war as a scholarly subject. Many of you have heard me beat this topical drum for several years now, and Kali and I have long discussed such a space in the journal. What sort of space will it be? A flexible space, as befits any discussion of (literary) canonicity and related issues. And I hereby solicit your input, a sort of permanent call for ideas and material, for this section of the journal. I'm interested in the canon of texts we study and teach in the field of Viet Nam war studies; how and why we maintain such a canon; how our work as academics—and how work in other professions—affects the shape of such a canon. I'm interested in individual texts, groups of related texts, recovery and availability of texts, how such matters affect the field of our study, and the like. In short, this space, like the subject it aims to explore, can assume virtually any shape we deem appropriate. Please contribute to what I hope will be a fruitful long-term discussion about the field of Viet Nam war studies.

Speaking of which, let me take that field itself, broadly defined, as the subject of this inaugural column....

BY THE TIME WE GOT TO TORONTO: A SORT OF HISTORY OF VIET NAM WAR CONFERENCING

It occurred to me two years ago, at the Louisville meeting of the Popular Culture Association, that Viet Nam war studies as a legitimate academic enterprise had indeed come into its own and already faced a crucial turning point. More recently, near the end of the *War and Peace* conference at Notre Dame last December (1993), someone who had never attended a Popular Culture Association meeting asked me if I would be going to the Viet Nam Area sessions again that year. I remarked that for the second year now I would not attend the PCA meeting, and somehow the conversation turned to the curious history of Viet Nam war scholars' relationship with the PCA, especially through the late 1980s.

I recalled for this person, as I did for myself at Louisville, the gratification of seeing our Area grow from its fledgling status in the mid-1980s to the largest section meeting under the Popular Culture umbrella by 1990. I noted how for the past couple of years, though, the core of that sizable section had splintered, and how other meetings had begun to siphon off some PCA participation. I began my own talk at Notre Dame by asserting that this is a critical moment for Viet Nam war studies, and this splintering and siphoning of energies is part of what

I had in mind. Upon leaving Louisville, and again upon leaving Notre Dame, I thought it appropriate to recall our history with the Popular Culture Association. That history has been stormy in recent years, as many *Viet Nam Generation* readers know; but when numbers of us first began to teach and publish about the Viet Nam war, the PCA meeting provided us the kind of forum that no other academic organization would. No matter where we go from here, scholars in all disciplines who study the Viet Nam war will always owe a debt to this annual rite of early spring.

I'm not certain when it began, technically speaking, but the first significant gathering of Viet Nam war scholars I recall was at Montreal in 1987, at the annual meeting of the Popular Culture Association. I don't know how many Viet Nam war panels there were or how many papers were read, but Montreal strikes me as the first concerted interdisciplinary gathering of scholars working on materials about the war. That gathering was by no means a large-scale affair—more symbolic, perhaps, or suggestive of a much larger trend shortly to establish itself. For many of us that first full-scale assembly convened the following year (1988) in New Orleans.

Viet Nam Area sessions were conducted that year in the ironically monikered "King's Quarters", what appeared to be an abandoned "no-tell" motel annexed by one of the (now defunct) convention hotels. A seedier site for an academic conclave I have never seen. Ask anyone who was there, they'll remember. Ask Kali; she was there, a young graduate student with an idea for a new journal. And most of the scholars already doing seminal work in this field were there, including every person to serve as Viet Nam Area Chair from 1986 to 1995: Bill Searle, Jackie Lawson, Brad Christie, Steve Potts, and Vince Gotera. Of these, Bill Searle remains the most noteworthy, chairing the Area for at least three years when Viet Nam war studies was hardly considered legitimate academic work. During these years Bill edited *Search and Clear* (Popular Press, 1988), the first anthology of formal criticism on Viet Nam war literature and films; and, as noted, the Area also ballooned at this time.

In New Orleans, the King's Quarters graciously hosted eighteen panels, some seventy papers, on the war. The 1989 meeting in St. Louis, Searle's last year as Area Chair, sported twenty-one sessions, over 150 papers and other presentations on Viet Nam. By this time it was typical for "regulars" at the Pop Culture meeting to sit through four full days of papers about the war, from 8:30am to 6:00pm; whenever a PCA session met, at least one Viet Nam Area panel convened. And by 1989 these panels were typically drawing around seventy-five audience members per session. The annual interest area caucus had become something of an inside joke, since Pat Browne (PCA Program Coordinator) combined our area with World War II studies. The year I chaired the caucus meeting in San Antonio, over fifty people showed up to talk about the Viet Nam war; one lone WWII scholar simply shook his head, bemused, and asked if he could join the party.

I do not mean to suggest that these years were tension-free, that the growth of our Area happened

without discord. On the contrary, Viet Nam Area meetings in the mid-1980s often attracted a vocal contingent of non-academic onlookers. Many of these were veterans with small-press book projects to peddle or other axes to grind. They generally did not sit on panels or read papers themselves, but they always had an earful for those who did. Typically, discussion sessions or formal responses to conference papers often closed in heated debate over the authority issue, "debate" of the "You people don't know what you're talking about; you weren't there! I was!" variety. PCA meetings have always appealed in part because of the dialogue (as opposed to the numbing monologue of most academic conferences); in these years Viet Nam Area sessions also bristled with the added energy of emotional tensions usually checked at ivory tower doors.

What Tim Lomperis calls "The High Tide of Passion" peaked in 1990 at Toronto. By now the PCA program featured some twenty Viet Nam Area panels, plus a film screening and special evening programs with Eugene McCarthy and Bill Ehrhart. We were quartered that year in another curious old hotel with a misleading regal name, the Royal York. Viet Nam war scholars held forth in the Alberta Room, a long, narrow space with ersatz cowhide wall panels and a gargantuan pair of longhorns mounted behind the speakers' table. (Again, ask anyone who was there....) Perhaps because of the scenery and atmosphere, these sessions were drawing around one hundred audience members per panel; the Alberta Room is the only academic setting I recall where Viet Nam war scholarship has played to Standing Room Only crowds. And that was the situation when Jackie Lawson, Area Chair that year, read a paper on the personal narratives of Viet Nam veterans. Here she contended that as a "failed war—an emasculating war," the Viet Nam war denied to the soldiers who fought it "the chance to achieve affirmative manhood." Rewriting the war in their narratives, though, Viet Nam veterans finally "validate war as an essential male activity." Oh, my. The veterans in the house—especially Bill Ehrhart, author of several personal narratives and a friend of Jackie's—couldn't believe what they were hearing.

My aim is not to defend or lambaste Jackie's talk; her work in this field is solid and stands on its own merits. I have merely tried to convey a sense of how things once went down, as I have not seen them go down at an academic conference before or since. Unwittingly, Jackie had touched a nerve, a raw and painful nerve, among the veterans. To this day, *Viet Nam Generation* contributing editor David Willson will regale listeners with his hilarious litany of "male pain," a theme which I suspect he dates to Toronto, 1990. It was not humorous at the time, however, when Bill Ehrhart heard a friend a colleague lump him and his work with several others which, she contended, valorized unconscionable human behavior. Bill sat seething in the front row until panel chair Owen Gilman opened the floor for discussion. Calmly at first, Bill asked Jackie if he had heard aright, if she had included his works with those others she had mentioned. Jackie was caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place, or rather between the aftershocks of succes-

sive lightning bolts, as Tim Lomperis has described a similar occasion (see *Reading the Wind*). Bill shortly launched into an impassioned plea for a different reading of his whole output: "If that's what you think my work is about, then all of my poetry, all of my other books and work—my whole life—is a joke!" he shouted. And there was much more.

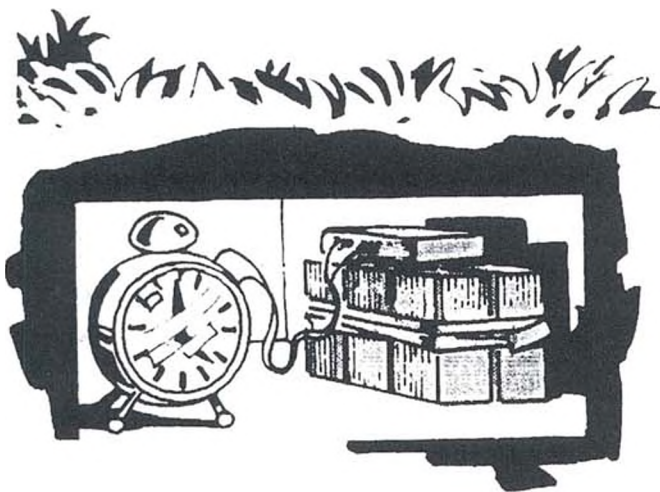
That night, Bill was to do a public reading. He had retreated from the Alberta Room, first to the conference area hallway, then to his hotel room for the rest of the afternoon and evening. He had threatened not to read after all, but did appear that night before a large gathering, sharing the program with former U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy (that part of the program is another story). Because of this unfortunate arrangement, Bill's time was already limited. Nonetheless he elected to revisit the events of earlier in the day, rehearsing and expanding upon much of what he had said in the afternoon. By the time he finished, he had only fifteen minutes or so to read his poetry. It was a strange, disconcerting evening, part sermon, part poetry reading, part anecdotal ramblings of an aged political radical (McCarthy, that is, not Ehrhart). There was plenty of male pain to go around that night.

For two more days, though Jackie was not seen again and Bill only occasionally, the Viet Nam Area sessions fairly buzzed with the aftermath of this encounter. And in a sense, the Popular Culture meeting has never quite been the same for us. The following year (1991) in San Antonio, the failing national economy clearly took a severe toll on scholars traveling to conferences. Though the PCA program again offered a full slate of Viet Nam Area sessions—twenty-one panels, two film screenings, and an evening poetry reading (another story in itself)—we had more no-shows than ever before, and the atmosphere seemed lacking. In stark contrast to the King's Quarters and the Alberta Room, we met in a cavernous ballroom with a most threatening sculpture/chandelier overhead. Hundreds of uniform chairs in a sea of institutional carpet only seemed to accentuate the declining number of participants. And nearly everyone remarked on the absence of the spark, the compelling energy of previous meetings. "Maybe we've peaked," one colleague suggested. "I think a lot of people are burned out on Viet Nam, ready to do other things, you know...." Echoing Paul Berlin, I found myself replying often that week, "Maybe so."

In 1992 I relived many of the same feelings about Viet Nam sessions at the PCA meeting in Louisville. The program was actually larger than ever before: twenty-three Viet Nam Area sessions, several poetry and fiction readings, Larry Rottmann's *Voices from the Ho Chi Minh Trail* revisited, and three powerful sessions on Viet Nam veteran visual art. Still, many of the "regulars" from previous years were absent, and again the atmosphere seemed more staid. The caucus meeting once more drew a large crowd. Area Chair Steve Potts echoed previous chairs' complaints about difficulties in working with conference Program Coordinator Pat Browne. It looked for a while like no one would serve as the next Area Chair until Vince Gotera graciously volunteered. The group gave him several ideas about organizing future programs,

and Kali announced the first *Sixties Generations* conference to be held in Fairfax, Virginia, the following spring, only a few weeks before the PCA meeting again in New Orleans. She emphasized that the new conference was not intended to compete with PCA, that all scholars working in the field were encouraged to participate in both meetings; but it naturally happened that few would attend both.

And for me, at least, that largely explains why I have not attended a Popular Culture Association meeting since Louisville. In 1993 there was the *Sixties Generations* conference, in December of that year Bob Slabey's long-planned-for *Reconciliation* conference at Notre Dame, and this fall has seen the second *Sixties Generations* gathering in Connecticut. I see many of the old crew at these new meetings—many new faces, too—and I know that I miss seeing others by not going to Pop Culture. Maybe I will go to Philadelphia in April. As I noted up front, Viet Nam war studies owes a sizable debt to the Popular Culture Association for having us under their wing for so many years. The field can probably now support its own association, and I for one would love to see that happen. Meanwhile, we are wise to support in strong numbers any conference, especially any institutionally-backed annual affair, that will facilitate our storied collegiality and further promote and validate our good work.



THE SURREAL JOURNEYS AWAY FROM WAR OF WOLFGANG BORCHERT AND TIM O'BRIEN

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The Nazis fought very well in defending their homeland against incredible pressures from both east and west. They were out-numbered, out-gunned, out-flanked out-everythinged. Yet the German soldiers fought bravely, even though a great many of them had long since given up any sense of a great or noble purpose. Once a soldier is in battle, the rational and moral faculties tend to diminish. All we can hope for is that these faculties don't fail entirely.

—Tim O'Brien

Wolfgang Borchert's short story "Die lange lange Strasse lang" ("Along the Long, Long Street") and Tim O'Brien's novel *Going After Cacciato* both describe imaginary journeys taken by their protagonists, journeys away from wars they believe to be wrong but have been forced to participate in. Both works present powerful critiques of the wars, but, ultimately, both fail to bring new insights out of the rubble, because both fail to confront particular issues. More specifically, both authors present their protagonists as victims and the authorities who force them to fight in immoral wars as victimizers. While this may be accurate as far as it goes, it is surely not a nuanced enough discussion of either war to suffice; it is a failure of political and moral vision to conflate the soldiers of the war, draftees though they may be, with the true victims of the wars' aggression: in WWII, the Jews, Poles, Gypsies, and other victims of the Nazis; in the Viet Nam war, the Vietnamese civilians.

Both Borchert's and O'Brien's works portray the conscripted soldier as a powerless person whose only possible solution is escape—but escape through the imagination only, not through action.

I do not mean to suggest that the United States is the equivalent of Nazi Germany. To do so would be to trivialize Nazi Germany and to obfuscate the true workings of the U.S. situation. The U.S. is clearly not a fascist country, yet it does undertake wars of aggression (or at least, as O'Brien would have it, wars of unclear purpose) and does coerce its citizens to fight in its army. O'Brien grapples with this dilemma in *Cacciato* and in his non-fiction account of his experiences as a soldier, *If I Die in a Combat Zone*. While I do not seek to draw any further parallels between Nazi Germany and the U.S. war in Viet Nam, I do wish to assert that the protagonists of Borchert's story and O'Brien's novel see themselves in very similar ways. Examining these similarities will, I hope, lead to some explanations of the failure of German postwar literature, and of U.S. post-Viet Nam war literature, to come to any new, useful insights about their respective wars.¹

"Die lange lange Strasse lang" consists of the interior monologue of Leutnant Fischer as he ostensibly walks home from the Russian front, a surreal journey in which he is trying to make his way to a streetcar. Borchert himself walked 600 kilometers home to Hamburg from a prison in SW Germany from which he was liberated by the Americans (Koepke, 54). However, Fischer is not actually making his way along the road—he is dying. His journey is one of imagination, in which Fischer tries to find meaning in his experience in the war and in the future of the world. We are given hints from the beginning that he is not really walking, that he is perhaps hallucinating, perhaps making his spiritual way through some afterworld. He sees a child begging her mother to let God give her some soup:

Die Mutter hat Haare, die sind schon tot. Lange schon tot. Die Mutter sagt: Der liebe Gott kann dir keine Suppe geben, er kann es doch nicht...Er hat doch keinen Löffel. (246)

[The mother's hair is already dead. Long since dead. The mother says: Dear God can give you no soup, he just can't...he has no spoon.]

The deadness of the mother's hair is a hint that Fischer may be in the world of the dead or at least the soon-to-be dead.

Fischer is the survivor of a group of 58 men, 57 of whom died when a mine was detonated. "*Und mich haben sie vergessen. Ich war noch nicht ganz tot.*" [And me, they forgot. I wasn't quite dead yet. (244).] He is haunted by these 57 deaths throughout the remainder of his journey. Fischer is trying to walk his way out of the horror, walk away from the war and the deaths, but his road keeps taking him into further horrors. Images of crucifixion keep recurring. He passes a smith forging nails which a small boy is carrying to the site of three crucifixions. Later on he passes a soccer field and a big house where a huge audience is witnessing the St. Matthew Passion. As he passes, he hears them screaming "BARABBAS." Fischer is, in effect, crucified between the two spectacles, the secular soccer game and the religious pageant. The implication is that the soldier is a sort of martyr to the civilians who witness the spectacle of the war.

Further on, he passes an organ-grinder who has a puppet who makes green powder, a green powder that will kill the whole world. Fischer smashes the little green-powder man, but

Freut euch, singt da der Leierkastenmann, so freut euch, singt der Leierkastenmann und nimmt aus seinem furchtbar grossen Kasten einen neuen Hampelmann mit einer Brille und mit einem weissen Kittel und mit einem Löffelchen ja Löffelchen voll hoffnungsgrünem Pulver. (262-3)

[Rejoice, sings the organ grinder, rejoice sings the organ grinder and takes out of his terrible deep pocket a new puppet with glasses and a white smock and a teaspoon, yes teaspoon full of hope-green powder.]

Wulf Koepke interprets this incident in the following way:

Thus when he [Borchert] warned against militarism, the war industry, and the patriotic-militaristic values of German educators...he was not concerned with the past, but with the future. The same is true when he pointed out the schizophrenic moral attitude of scientists working for the destruction of mankind (58).

Fischer is thus walking into a vision of religious and scientific apocalypse. In the end, Fischer reaches the streetcar he has been seeking. The 57 dead are there. He is given a "*hoffnungsgrünes Billett*" [hope-green ticket, (264)] for which he pays by giving the conductor the 57 men. The story ends in much the same way as Borchert's famous play "*Draussen vor der Tür*" ["The Man Outside"] ends, with a cry: "*Und keiner weiss: wohin? Und alle fahren: mit. Und keiner weiss—und keiner weiss—und keiner weiss—*" [And nobody knows: where to? And everyone rides along. And nobody knows—and nobody knows—and nobody knows, (264).]

One of the reasons Fischer cannot walk away from apocalyptic visions is that he is driven by guilt. He is evidently guilty of killing an old man. He remembers/imagines a conversation with Timm, a fellow-soldier character who recurs throughout Borchert's works.

Timm sagt, ich hätte den Alten nicht vom Wagen schubsen sollen. Ich hab den Alten nicht vom Wagen geschubst. Du hättest es nicht tun sollen, sagt Timm (248)

[Timm says I shouldn't have pushed the old guy from the wagon. I didn't push the old guy from the wagon. You shouldn't have done it, says Timm.]

Fischer also feels guilty for the deaths of the 57, although he is not responsible for them in any direct way. He has a sort of survivor's guilt, constantly haunted by the dead, constantly remembering "*57 haben sie bei Woronesch begraben. Ich bin über.*" [57 were buried at Woronesch. I'm left over, (249).] He enumerates them by profession, drawing attention to the personal nature of the sacrifice being made:

57 kommen jede Nacht nach Deutschland. 9 Autoschlosser, 2 Gärtner, 5 Beamte, 6 Verkäufer, 1 Friseur, 17 Bauern, 2 Lehrer, 1 Pastor, 6 Arbeiter, 1 Musiker, 7 Schuljungen. 57 kommen jede Nacht an mein Bett, 57 fragen jede Nacht: Wo ist deine Kompanie? Bei Woronesch, sag ich dann. Begraben, sag ich dann. Bei Woronesch begraben. 57 fragen Mann für Mann: Warum? Und 57mal bleib ich stumm. (249)

[57 come every night to Germany. 9 auto mechanics, 2 gardeners, 5 officials, 6 salesmen, 1 barber, 17 farmers, 2 teachers, 1 pastor, 6 workers, 1 musician, 7 schoolboys. 57 come every night to my bed, 57 ask every night: Where is your company? At Woronesch, I say then. Buried, I say then. Buried at Woronesch. 57 ask man after man, Why? And 57 times I say nothing.]

The constant stress on numbers and accounting will never add up, for Fischer, to an equation which will allow him to answer the persistent question, why?

Borchert puts the blame for the war on a failure of authority, as he does also in his play "The Man Outside."

He blames the war on a betrayal of the younger generation by their elders. In neither work does he examine the specific political issues of Nazism. When Fischer has no answer for the 57, they go in turn to "ihrem Vater," [their father] to the "Ortsvorsteher," [local official] to the "Pfarrer," [parson] to the "Schulmeister," [schoolmaster] to the General, who "dreht sich nicht einmal rum. Da bringt der Vater ihn um. Und der Pfarrer? Der Pfarrer bleibt stumm." [... doesn't turn around. The father kills him. And the pastor? The pastor remains mute.] They go to the "Minister," who says,

Deutschland, Kameraden, Deutschland! Darum! Da sehen die 57 sich um. Stumm. So lange und stumm. Und sie sehen nach Süden und Norden und Westen und Osten. Und dann fragen sie leise: Deutschland? Darum? Dann drehen die 57 sich rum. Und sehen sich niemals mehr um. 57 legen sich bei Woronesch wieder ins Grab. Sie haben alle arme Gesichter. Wie Frauen. Wie Mütter. Und sie sagen die Ewigkeit durch: Darum? Darum? Darum? (250)

[Germany, Comrades, Germany! For that! The 57 don't look around. Silent. So long silent. They look to the South and North and West and East. And then they ask quietly, Germany? For that? Then the 57 turn around. And don't look around again. They lay themselves back in the grave at Woronesch. They have old, poor, faces. Like women. Like mothers. And they say through all eternity: for that? for that? for that?]

None of these authority figures are able to satisfy Fischer's quest for meaning, any more than his obsessive numerical accounting can.

However, as Koepke points out, Borchert points to those who are guilty:

generals, industrialists, officials, scientists, educators... It is surprising to find that Borchert is not at all concerned with Nazis. Although he clearly identifies militarism and nationalism as wrong and dangerous attitudes, he does not seem to identify the Nazis as the real enemies. It is inconceivable that a man who suffered so much from the Nazi regime and ultimately lost his life because of it, would belittle the crimes of the Nazis and the disaster they brought over Germany and the world. We rather have to assume that he was not so much concerned with a "Bewältigung" [overcoming] of the past, but of the present and future (58-9).

While I think that Koepke is largely right, I cannot agree with his conclusion. Rather, I see Borchert's failure to grapple with the Nazis as his fatal blind spot—a blind spot I think Koepke actually shares. Koepke accuses the Nazis of bringing disaster to Germany, and the world. Borchert accuses the war of ruining the lives of German soldiers and civilians. The price of the war is viewed as very close to home. Neither Borchert's vision nor Koepke's extends to the other victims of the Nazis.

Borchert makes one attempt in "Die lange lange Strasse lang" to see other victims—the 86 Russians.

...sagt der Obergefreite mit der Krücke...86 Iwans haben wir die eine Nacht geschafft. 86 Iwans. Mit einem

MG, mein Lieber, mit einem einzigen MG in einer Nacht...Aber die wohnen in Russland. Davon weiss [der Obergefreite] nichts. Es ist gut, dass er das nicht weiss. Was sollte er sonst wohl machen? Jetzt, wo es Abend wird? Nur ich weiss es. Ich bin Leutnant Fischer. 57 haben sie bei Woronesch begraben. (254-5)

[The corporal with the crutch says...we shot 86 Ivans in one night. 86 Ivans. With a machine gun, oh boy, with a single machine gun in one night...but they live in Russia. The corporal knows nothing about that. It is good, that he knows nothing. What should he then do? Now is it getting dark? Only I know. I am Lieutenant Fischer. They buried 57 at Woronesch].

The corporal can't see the 86, because they are on the other side. Fischer can see them only because they are fellow soldiers, and he can assimilate their number, 86, to the number of his dead company. But Fischer poses the question that Borchert cannot answer: "Was sollte er sonst wohl machen?" (What then should he do?)

J.H. Reid makes a vital point about Borchert's division of the world into victims/victimizers, with no other positions possible on the scale. Speaking of "The Man Outside," Reid says,

We are all guilty: 'Wir werden jeden Tag ermordet und jeden Tag begehen wir einen Mord. Wir gehen jeden Tag an einem Mord vorbei' (p. 138) ['We are murdered every day and every day we commit a murder. We walk by a murder every day.'] A comfortable and comforting statement, inasmuch as it makes the victors as guilty as the vanquished, the Jews as guilty as their persecutors. Indeed it shares with the Allies' accusation of 'collective guilt' a complete lack of discrimination. Existential guilt leaves no room for political judgments. (185)

It is precisely that lack of political judgement that handicaps Borchert's work and that keeps the agonized Fischer from finding an answer to his "why?". Hannah Arendt has argued that this sort of levelling of the idea of guilt and potential for evil is a way of avoiding truly thinking about these issues:

I always hated this notion of 'Eichmann in each one of us.' This is simply not true. This would be as untrue as the opposite, that Eichmann is in nobody. In the way I look at things, this is much more abstract than the most abstract things I indulge in so frequently—if we mean by abstract: really not thinking through experience. (Hill 308)

Still, I don't mean to discount Borchert's work either artistically or politically. I do want to note, however, that his work is bound within a narrow framework that can never give any answers to the questions it raises. It does not provide new ways of thinking about German nationalism, Nazism, or the war that might help Borchert's readers to greater insights.

Borchert is clearly protesting, clearly calling for some action. What exactly is his position? Jacqueline Padgett has analyzed his view of the poet's role in war as follows:

The heroic act, the poet must conclude, is silence...The poet, however, cannot be content with this outworn role of hero. Heroism has lost its viability as well. He must protest, refusing the convenient comfort of silence (158).

Borchert does protest, but he does not foreswear silence. His silence is selective. He does not answer Fischer's question, "What should he then do?" In "*Dann gibt es nur eins!*" ["There's Only One Thing"], Borchert's ultimate answer is "*Sag Nein!*" ["Say no!"] a utopian and not very well grounded call for action through negation. In "*Die lange lange Strasse lang,*" Fischer cannot say no to anything. He (like Borchert) has already participated. If we can only learn to say no through such participation, then it will always be already too late.

Tim O'Brien in his work also does not answer the question "what then should he do?" *Going After Cacciato* is a work very different from "*Die lange lange Strasse lang,*" but it shares a central device: the protagonist, Paul Berlin, imagines himself going on a journey with his squad to bring back Cacciato, a soldier who has deserted and is walking to Paris. The novel has a tripartite structure. Berlin remembers his experiences in the war in chapters that alternate with the imaginative and surreal journey to Paris. He is imagining this journey while he spends a night on guard, and several chapters take place in the observation post which he occupies.

We are alerted from the beginning that Berlin's journey to Paris is imaginary but is more than an idle romp: "No, it wasn't dreaming. It was a way of asking questions." (46) The major question driving him is whether he, too, should desert, and what his obligations and possibilities are. His questioning turns out to be inconclusive. Given the conditions of the novel, it can only be inconclusive because it is carried out in the absence of any political analysis, in the absence of any consideration of the issues of the war, in the absence of any knowledge of the people and the politics being fought against. And, importantly, it remains imaginary. Berlin never translates it into action. At the end of the novel, we are returned to "reality"—Cacciato has slipped away from the patrol just at the Laotian border, and Berlin has experienced an episode of panic when the squad moved in on Cacciato, and not done his part. In the imaginary journey, no action other than imaginary action can be taken. But political problems must be solved by non-imaginary actions, or all one is left with is some claim to "inner immigration."

As with Lieutenant Fischer, Paul Berlin's imaginings are driven by guilt. He has participated in a conspiracy to murder Lieutenant Sidney Martin, who has ordered his men to explore tunnels they've discovered. Two men have died in these explorations. The surviving squad members believe that Martin is endangering their lives unnecessarily, so they murder him to preserve themselves. Dean McWilliams, in an interesting study that examines the chronology of the novel, shows how the alternation of chapters—Berlin's memories of the deaths of his squad members, and the conspiracy to murder Martin, interact with the happenings in the fantasy journey to Paris and show that "the fantasy is a flight not only from Vietnam

but from responsibility for a mutinous murder committed there." (246) This flight from responsibility reflects the drift of most of American writing about the war in Viet Nam. McWilliams points out that "Berlin sees himself as an innocent caught in the Vietnamese quagmire, an individual carried along mechanistically by forces beyond his control." (246) In this way he is similar to Borchert's protagonist who, if he does not see himself as an innocent, certainly does see himself as a victim carried along by forces beyond his control.

Berlin's moral troubles actually arise from asking the wrong questions. Self-preservation is his only goal and always has been, but he sees self-preservation in very short-term ways. Lt. Martin is a representative of the authority that has betrayed the soldiers, but he is only a small, local representative, and killing him solves the immediate problem, but does not extricate them from the larger problem. The larger problem is their belief in the American mythology that says that any war that America fights must be a just one, that there must be some substance to the battle against communism, that there must be some reason for this war and for everything America stands for. Only by coming to terms with the reality behind the myth—that the U.S. is a nation built on genocide, that it has waged wars for conquest, domination, power, and expansion from its very beginning—could a political analysis that might illuminate the entirety of the situation be built. In an interview, O'Brien said that the question posed by the book is, "How does one do right in an evil situation?" (Schroeder 145) The book poses no questions about the reasons behind the evil situation: questions that might work toward the changing of the entire complex of forces that have created the situation. Doing good in an evil situation requires a (contestable) analysis of the whole situation. In order to form such an analysis, one must have a moral theory. O'Brien has said that one of the reasons he did not desert himself was because he couldn't be sure that he was right and the U.S. government was wrong. One can never be entirely sure whether one is right, but if one is paralyzed by that uncertainty, then one stands the chance of being pulled into evil actions, as Paul Berlin is (the fragging of his lieutenant) and O'Brien himself was (burning Vietnamese villages as he describes in *If I Die in a Combat Zone*).

In another interview, O'Brien has said

...based on my own experience, not many of the soldiers believed that Vietnam was an evil war. Most people fighting there—the ordinary grunts like me—didn't think much about issues of good and evil. These things simply didn't cross their minds most of the time. Instead, inevitably, their attention was on the mosquitos and bugs and horrors and pains and fears. These were the basic elements of the Vietnam war, and the same were present at the Battle of Hastings or Thermopylae or wherever. (McCaffery 134)

Equating the very different moral and political situations of Hastings and Thermopylae, and of all wars, is the same kind of blanket analysis we find in Borchert's view that everyone is guilty. Both are analyses that ultimately

produce evasion, rather than greater understanding. Extending O'Brien's analysis to the North Vietnamese Army points out the degree to which it is a non-analysis. O'Brien's analysis would have the NVA soldiers and US equally focussed on "mosquitos and bugs and horrors," as devoid of political and moral purpose as O'Brien portrays U.S. soldiers as being. Reading Vietnamese communist accounts shows that this was not the case.

One of the major problems with *Cacciato* (and most American books about the war in Viet Nam) is that they are, indeed, focussed on the "mosquitos and bugs and horrors." Like Borchert's work, *Cacciato* still appears to be a first reaction to the war, yet it is O'Brien's third book dealing with the war, written ten years after his war experience. O'Brien has had the advantage of surviving long after his war, unlike Borchert, who died two years after coming home, and wrote all of his works in that time. For twenty years now, the U.S. as a whole has been unwilling to look beyond this first-reaction response to the war, to look beyond simple dichotomies such as all soldiers are victims, all authorities are victimizers, and the view that only the U.S. side can be/should be/needs to be looked at.

Cacciato, like most U.S. Viet Nam war fiction, sees the war as the U.S. vs. the U.S. The squad is battling with Lt. Martin. Berlin is battling with himself. In the imaginary journey to Paris, the squad is chasing, not the enemy, but one of their own men. And in a scene where the death of one member of the squad is described, the man, Pederson, is killed by machine-gun fire from one of his own helicopters. Dying, he shoots back at the helicopter. (161-2) The war is thus neatly transformed into U.S. vs. U.S., and nothing else needs to be looked at. Indeed, in the national paradigm, nothing else can be looked at. Thus, O'Brien's attempt to represent the other side fails because it is really an attempt only to represent Americans' imaginings of the other side.

Two Vietnamese characters have speaking parts in the novel. One is a woman, Sarkin Aung Wan (not a phonetically possible Vietnamese name), who serves as Berlin's guide and sweetheart on the journey to Paris. She is never anything more than Berlin's imagining, something the novel acknowledges, but does not critique. When she is introduced, she is a refugee, fleeing with her two aunts. A member of the squad shoots one of their water buffalo, then the squad continues on with the refugees in their wagon with their remaining buffalo. Sarkin Aung Wan is beautiful and inscrutable. She embodies all the American clichés about Asian women. She would "dearly like to be a refugee in Paris." (79) U.S. authors seem only to be able to imagine Asia as a place from which people want to flee, and the West only as a desirable place to flee to. In soldier's jargon, the U.S. is referred to as "The World." There is an ongoing contrast in the novel between "civilization" and Viet Nam, which is something other than civilization.

Already he anticipated the textures of things familiar: decency, cleanliness, high literacy and low mortality, the pursuit of learning in heated schools, science, art, industry bearing fruit through smokestacks. Wasn't

this the purpose? The goal? Some vision of virtue? ...*Even in Vietnam*—wasn't the intent to restrain forces of incivility? (328; emphasis added)

Even in Vietnam, a place somehow outside of civilization.

Sarkin Aung Wan, even though she is Berlin's imagined creation, is completely unknowable. "What did she want? Refuge, as sought by refugees, or escape, as sought by victims? It was impossible to tell." (308) "He would ask her to see the matter his way...Were her dreams the dreams of ordinary men and women?" (313) Notice that "ordinary men and women" are American men and women. Berlin does not ask if her dreams are those of "familiar" men and women, of "men and women I know," but whether they're those of "ordinary" men and women.

Berlin's imagination is very convenient where Asian characters are concerned. The two aunts completely disappear from the narrative, without explanation.

Not only is Sarkin Aung Wan unknown and, more importantly, unknowable; Viet Nam itself is unknowable.

They [U.S. soldiers] did not know if it was a popular war, or, if popular, in what sense. They did not know if the people of Quang Ngai viewed the war stoically, as it sometimes seemed, or with grief, as it seemed other times, or with bewilderment or greed or partisan fury. It was impossible to know. (310)

It may be impossible for Paul Berlin, completely caught up in his own interpretive framework, to know, but it certainly is not unknowable in any transcendent way. Some U.S. soldiers did learn Vietnamese and talk to Vietnamese people. Some U.S. soldiers spoke with Vietnamese people who spoke English. It was not impossible, but the common American mindset made it seem impossible, a condition which *Cacciato* replicates.

Perhaps a better gauge of the novel's failure to imagine the other side is embodied in Li Van Hgoc (another naming error—he asks to be called "Van," his middle name, which is not a possible form of address for a Vietnamese; "Li" and "Hgoc" are likewise not possible Vietnamese names). Li Van Hgoc is a deserter (again, the novel makes an error: he is introduced as Viet Cong major, but later he turns out to have been born in Hanoi and drafted, meaning he would have been drafted into the PAVN, not the Viet Cong). He has been sentenced to live in a tunnel for ten years. In a surreal sequence the squad has fallen into this tunnel. They converse with Li Van Hgoc.

'The soldier is but the representative of the land. The land is your true enemy.' ...nodded Li Van Hgoc....
'So the land mines—'
'The land defending itself.'
'The tunnels.'
'Obvious, isn't it?'
'The hedges and paddies.'
'Yes,' the officer said. (107-8)

While U.S. soldiers might often have felt that the land itself was the enemy, to put those words into the mouth of a Vietnamese soldier is to be guilty of an indefensible

political analysis, which devalues the war efforts of those very Vietnamese soldiers. The land itself did not recycle U.S. c-ration cans into booby traps—Vietnamese soldiers did. By making Li Van Hgoc a deserter, like Cacciato and Berlin's squad, the novel is trying to show a commonality between soldiers. But through the conversation quoted above, it is simultaneously denying the Vietnamese their role as soldiers.

Further, making Li Van Hgoc a prisoner in the tunnels imprisoned by his own government obscures the real role of the tunnels. "The land, Paul Berlin kept thinking. A prisoner of war, caught by the land." (121) Vietnamese soldiers who worked in the tunnels were held prisoner there not by their land, but by U.S. bombing. The tunnels were constructed as a way to survive U.S. munitions. Thus, by a clever step, U.S. responsibility in the war is neatly sidestepped. This sidestep is reminiscent of the absence of Nazis in Borchert's analysis of his war. Again, I'm not suggesting that the U.S. government consisted of Nazis. What I am suggesting is that Borchert's blind spot and O'Brien's blind spot keep them from a complete analysis of guilt, innocence, and the causes for their wars. Their blind spots arise because they are too enmeshed in their own cultures to have a place to stand to look at those cultures. Their war experiences, in the absence of political analysis, were not sufficient to give them that place to stand.

The lack of political analysis, the belief in the American mythology, produces this musing of Paul Berlin's, which follows his contrasting of "Vietnam" and "civilization" in the passage quoted above:

Even in Vietnam—wasn't the intent to restrain forces of incivility? The intent. Wasn't it to impede tyranny, aggression, repression? To promote some vision of goodness? Oh, something had gone terribly wrong. But the aims, the purposes, the ends—weren't they right? Wasn't self-determination a proper aim of civilized man? Wasn't political freedom a part of justice? Wasn't military aggression, unrestrained, a threat to civilization and order? Oh, yes—something had gone wrong. Facts, circumstances, understanding. But had the error been wrong intention, wrong purpose? (328)

Berlin believes the bill of goods sold him by the U.S. government in order to carry on its war. He believes in the U.S.'s good intentions, or at least wants to believe so much that he can't bring himself to believe anything else. Of course, even a cursory familiarity with the history of Viet Nam and the history of U.S. intervention in Viet Nam shows that self-determination and freedom were never elements of the South Vietnamese state that the U.S. created, and that military aggression was on the U.S. side. But it is convenient and easy for Americans not to have that familiarity with history. And, of course, believing in anything other than U.S. good intentions brings up Borchert's question, "What then should he do?" And mainstream U.S. literature about the Viet Nam war has not even posed that question yet, so there has been no progress toward an answer.

The lack of analysis produces another failing, which, again, is a common failing of U.S. literature about the Viet

Nam war. This is the almost sentimental longing for a simple, clean war, and the belief that there could be such a thing. In one of the chapters in which Berlin remembers his war experiences, he remembers a series of basketball games played by his squad. In an interview, O'Brien described this sequence as a way of hinting at the boredom that occupies much of a soldier's time. (Schroeder 141) There is, however, more going on in the basketball scenes than that. The basketball games represent a longing in Berlin for a clean war.

Still, there was always basketball. Games were won and lost, mostly won, and he found himself looking forward to it. He liked reciting the final scores: 50 to 46; 68 to 40; once, in My Khe 2, a lopsided 110 to 38. He liked the clarity of it. He liked knowing who won, and by how much, and he liked being a winner. (128).

This underlying belief in a clean war, in a "good war," is part of what allows the U.S. to keep fighting wars.

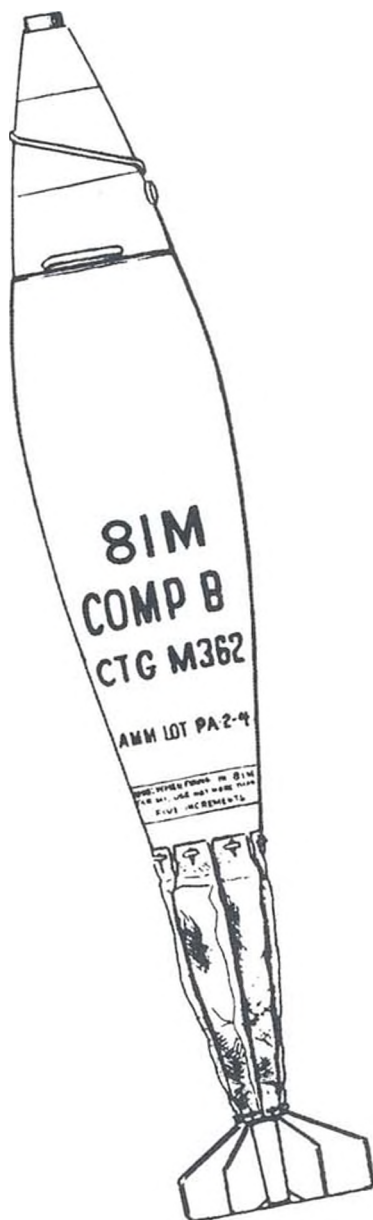
O'Brien wants to believe that the Viet Nam war might have been a just war because he wants to believe that Americans fight just wars. What he does not want to do is to examine why he believes that Americans fight just wars. Much of that belief, for his generation, comes from American books and films about WWII. No matter how awful the immediate conditions might be for the soldiers, no matter the "mosquitos and bugs and horrors," there is an unshakable belief in those works in the rectitude and justice of what the American soldiers were doing, and rightly so. But reading American post-Viet Nam war books alongside German postwar books shows that O'Brien's generation has been misled. It is in the literature of the losers of WWII, rather than the winners, that the parallels with U.S. Viet Nam war literature can be drawn.

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NOTES

¹ There are connections that can be made between other postwar German works and American post Viet Nam-war works. For example, the continual haunting of Fischer in Borchert's story is structurally and morally similar to Larry Heinemann's *Paco's Story*, which is narrated by the ghosts of Paco's dead platoon who continue to haunt him after he has come home from the war. Heinrich Böll's *Das Vermächtnis* (translated as *A Soldier's Legacy*) and Philip Caputo's *Indian Country* might also be compared fruitfully. They share a narrative drive toward revelation of a secret haunting the main characters. In each case, that secret is the truth about the circumstances of a friend's death.



CREATING AN ILLUSION

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H. Bruce Franklin, *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America* (expanded and updated edition). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

Elliot Gruner, *Prisoners of Culture: Representing the Vietnam P.O.W.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993.

Craig Howes. *Voices of the Vietnam POWs: Witnesses to Their Fight.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Robert C. Doyle. *Voices of Captivity: Interpreting the POW Narratives.* Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1994.

Although POWs and MIA's have historical antecedents within American society, the Viet Nam association is the one now prominent in the public mind. These four books represent different attempts towards evaluating an issue uniting different constituencies, one more cultural and ideological than historical and factual. In an era attempting to repress social welfare movements of previous decades, promoting news as empty (supposedly "democratic") talk-show spectacles, it is instructive to examine how political and media forces use one dubious issue as a cultural weapon. As *M(urdoch)TV*, and other corporate cable and satellite entities attempt to infect public consciousness and promote an affluent world available only to the privileged few, the battle for ideas becomes crucial. Understanding the growth of the POW/MIA ideology in that context is crucial. Tempting though it is to regard the issue as belonging entirely to demented grizzled, ex-veterans selling Jane Fonda urinals at booths near the Washington Vietnam Veterans Memorial, this is mistaken. The subject also involves others (not all of whom belong to the Viet Nam generation) who sincerely believe that there are still (or were) American servicemen held against their will. It has overtones of religious belief. Rational discussion is insufficient unless there is recognition of powerful mythic and ideological factors within the debate.

H. Bruce Franklin's updated work lucidly examines the facts behind the issue. Written by one of America's most distinguished radical literary and cultural historians, *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America* reveals political and ideological factors behind the deliberate creation of a myth resembling the equally pernicious 19th Century Last Stand Legend Richard Slotkin documents in *The Fatal Environment* (1985). Despite dismissal as a reductive social reflection scholar by postmodernist critics, Franklin's critical practice often relies on the presence of

uncomfortable historical facts and painstaking research apologists for the present system deny as "irrelevant". But a refreshing perspective often exists within social reflection applications combating the Baudelaire-*flâneur* evasiveness high theorists engage in. (See Franklin's recent analysis of Viet Nam war influences affecting certain *Star Trek* episodes in "Star Trek in the Vietnam Era," *Science-Fiction Studies* 21.1 [1994], 243-253 here).

M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America is in the radical tradition of I.F. Stone and Noam Chomsky. Deliberately written in an open and accessible style designed to reach a wide audience, the book is a crucial work in this field. Meticulously nuanced and scrupulously documented, Franklin pulls no punches in describing his work as not just a polemic against the idea of POW/MIA. imprisonment but, "rather, a cultural and political history of how and why this belief, contradicted by all evidence and logic, became both the official postwar rationale for continuing hostilities against Vietnam and a national myth profoundly significant to late-twentieth-century American society." (xi) Although generated at a time when American was literally losing its war against Viet Nam, it continued to be a vital ideological weapon in continuing economic and diplomatic hostilities against a former enemy as well as mobilizing national opinion against the restoration of normal contact. Begun by the White House as a strategy to continue the war in the late 60s, the issue was used by many players in the past and present such as Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Ross Perot, Chuck Norris, Sylvester Stallone, Ronald Reagan, and the Clinton administration to attack a country having the audacity to defeat a heavily-armed superpower.

Franklin cites important evidence to counter the issue's over-emotional context. Of the 2,255 still "unaccounted for," half the number were never considered as either MIA's or POWs by the military. 1,095 of these were known to be "killed in action." Despite depictions in *Rambo* and *Missing in Action*, 81% of these men were not grunts but airmen whose bodies were lost at sea, or on remote mountains, or in tropical rain forests. Metal fatigue could cause a plane to explode in flight (100). Any injured airman contracting an infection would be unlikely to survive even if cared for by Viet Cong or North Vietnamese soldiers who often protected prisoners from villagers angered by napalm attacks (101-105). There were actually more MIA's in previous wars—78,750 from World War II and 8,177 from the Korean War. All major wars have combatants who died without identification or recovery. The Viet Nam war figures are surprisingly small, comprising less than 4% of the 58,152 killed (11-12). "Bodies left in Indochina would additionally suffer the ravages of the tropical climate, with its monsoon rains, engulfing mud, and vegetative overgrowth, and would likely be torn apart and scattered by animals." (12) In fact, official investigations conclude that the actual number of POWs unaccounted for varies between 13 and 11. Except for one defector, all but four of these died in captivity and they may not have survived beyond 1970. (95-96) Franklin shows that documented facts are not important in the debate. The POW/MIA. issue is an entity manufactured by interested political and corporate per-

sonalities and is designed to continue the War and convince the American public that a "Yellow Peril" demonic Vietnamese held prisoners after 1973. Noting the involvement of Richard Nixon and H. Ross Perot, then-director of the Richard Nixon Foundation, Franklin documents the development of the issue into a strategically manipulated act of national religious faith by key players such as Gloria Coppin (wife of Los Angeles industrialist and military contractor, Douglas Coppin) in the VIVA bracelet campaign and others such as Martha Raye, Bob Hope, and Robert Dole—the last two still active (with Peter Rollins and General Westmoreland) on the Board of Trustees of Viet Nam Generation's "rival" *Journal of the Vietnam Veterans Institute*.

Despite the war's end, the American Government made an unprecedented demand that Viet Nam account for all supposedly missing servicemen conveniently ignoring the unaccounted hundreds of thousands of Viet Cong, North Vietnamese soldiers and innocent civilians incarcerated and tortured to death in South Viet Nam's notorious tiger-cage prisons. A clearly impossible demand generated the POW/MIA myth (68). Throughout the 1970s, the Pentagon played a deceptive numbers game despite admission by the Defense Department in 1973 that they had no evidence concerning missing Americans (91). Facts became overshadowed by myth and legend. Franklin's survey of Robert Garwood's changing evidence contradicts many works citing him as a reliable source.

Those who offer Robert Garwood's stories as proof that Vietnam has been keeping American POWs actually demonstrate the opposite. It is especially revealing that Garwood, a fine specimen of POW/MIA mythmaking, began telling his tales of live POWs in Vietnam only after the first POW rescue movies had begun their transformation of American culture. (116-117).

The Nixon Homecoming Spectacle and movie representations are familiar stories. In Reagan-era historical revisionism, right wing academics faced a formidable task since facts kept getting in the way. But the situation was different on the cultural level. Popular culture revisionists could ignore history and "rely entirely on manipulative images" (133) as various texts from *The Deer Hunter* onwards show.

Franklin's documented work shows that history and truth count. They are to be neglected at our peril, especially in an era when Holocaust deniers target student newspapers for neo-Nazi propaganda. Despite evidence that no live American POWs exist, Franklin is pessimistic over the possibility of the MIA myth withering away. As he notes in his concluding evidence concerning the Gulf War supposedly quashing the legacy of Viet Nam, Tsar Boris Yeltsin's attempt to use the discourse to gain American aid, Ross Perot's manipulative innovations during the last Presidential campaign, and purported discoveries of "new evidence" by right wing British historians, the struggle continues. This mythic narrative arises from sources within American culture going much further back than the Viet Nam War. While Richard Slotkin's alternative of a new progressive mythology

(suggested in the concluding chapter of *Gunfighter Nation*) still awaits realization, it is important to understand this new captivity myth for what it actually is. Here, Franklin characteristically pulls no punches.

In the final analysis, the POW/MIA myth must be understood not just as a convenient political gimmick for rationalizing various kinds of warfare and jingoism but also as a symptom of a profound psychological sickness in American culture. One path back toward mental health would be through an honest self-examination of how and why a society could have been so possessed by such a grotesque myth.(168)

Franklin's examination falls into the factual and historical category. By contrast, Elliot Gruner's *Prisoners of Culture* represents an exploration into other facets of that "grotesque myth" categorized by Franklin. Gruner deals less with MIAs and more with POWs, or, rather, representations of POWs within American culture. Gruner's style is concise and straightforward. Obviously well-versed in cultural studies and theoretical approaches, he avoids the difficult terminology inherent within the field. Like Franklin, he presents the reader with a clear, description of the issues involved. The title of his book ironically states his thesis: returning POWs faced a second imprisonment, one involving the stranglehold of American ideology.

Gruner's work deals with cultural representations of Viet Nam war POWs within the popular media of television, film, and mass culture in general. The title of his work is reminiscent of Frederic Jameson's *The Prison House of Language*. If Jameson critiques the rigid methodologies of certain twentieth century literary theories, Gruner takes issue with dangerous discursive tendencies conditioning representations within American culture. He analyzes his chosen terrain often by quiet understatement. But it never defuses a rigorous analytic attack. Understatement is often far more powerful than frontal assault, especially if the author writes within constraining panopticon confines. Here, Gruner achieves much by his chosen discursive strategic approach.

By careful selection, Gruner narrates the process "of how a lived experience moves through our culture." (6) investigating the Viet Nam POW image within the particular confines of his study. He cites Franklin's work as well as the difficulties of studying whatever accounts exist from those who suffered under both South and post-1975 Vietnamese gulags. As Craig Howes also recognizes, more material is needed especially from Vietnamese sources to comprehend the implications of the entire issue. Gruner thus concentrates upon recent POW images. He begins with media representations in *The Great Escape* (1963), *Prisoner of War* (1954), *The Rack* (1956), and *Hogan's Heroes* showing how the 1968 Pueblo incident forced Americans to face the reality of captivity. The Viet Nam war-era POW issues did not really surface until after 1969 when Nixon used them for his own ends as a pretext for forcing peace and uniting a divided America. (19). Operation Homecoming saw the POWs manipulated into becoming ideological heroes, speaking for a lost

American self, attempting to restore "continuity with a pre-Vietnam War America many ached to recover." (23) The return led to a spate of newspaper articles, interviews, autobiographies, bracelets, and TV movies such as *When Hell Was in Session*. An ideological processing began whereby the POWs became the new heroes for a post-Viet Nam war American generation. Ironically, Sylvester Stallone and Chuck Norris replaced them on the screen ten years later. A special POW image emerged, avoiding complications and contradictions, highlighting those "who fed their audience imaginary resolutions that created the optical illusion of a just, honest war with healthy, if not entirely, happy veterans. The Vietnam war POW had become a prisoner of America's expectations and needs: there could be no escape. The press, the spin doctors in the White House, and the producers in Hollywood would have it their way."(27).

Gruner notes the centrality of the Puritan Captivity Narrative in this process. Long recognized as an important cultural motif within Viet Nam representations, Gruner draws out the particular implications in this narrative lending themselves to ideological manipulation.

The POW story portrays the war as a transcendent ahistorical struggle. The struggle becomes ahistoric because it focuses attention on the psychological battle and away from the human carnage of the war in South Vietnam. The imminent victory of the POW-hero relies not on his latent physical superiority but instead on the transcendent sovereignty of the individual.(33-34)

Eventually the POW narratives become haunting emblems of an American self, representing allegorical images of captivity and rebirth for a new, united America. By focusing on the description with POW autobiography, Gruner notes the influence of media fame after Operation Homecoming. Narratives became standardized and packaged, subjected to unambiguous image representations, sound bytes, and rigid textual closures. With concise footnoted references to discursive critics such as Baudrillard and Foucault, Gruner outlines a particular packaging making the individual POWs spoken subjects for a reified ideology. Autobiographies reach for familiar metaphors and language understandable to an American public wishing to deny the complex historical and political lessons of the War.

Analyzing the aesthetically barren, but ideologically revealing *The Hanoi Hilton*, Gruner finds a free-association text composed of narrative perspectives from World War II and Korea contained within a form meeting the needs of a mass market audience, not the actual POWs themselves. Ironically, as Gruner notes, the film (promoted by Ronald Reagan himself!) paralleled attempts the North Vietnamese made in using the POWs for propaganda purposes. As two-week captive Kate Webb realized, media representations can never adequately reconstruct the POW experience.

Yet reconstructions occur often using inappropriate advertising hype techniques. Analyzing the selling of Everett Alvarez, Jr., Gruner notes how an ad in *People*

magazine used this veteran. With obvious reference to his autobiographical accounts of captivity, the representation placed the veteran (and audiences) within conservative discursive devices.

Revelations of his experience appeal to the religious qualities of confession while hinting at the secular possibilities of psychological trauma and recovery: another 911 success story for us, another self-help success story for the American individual. Alvarez's 'confession' appears to unburden him of his painful past while promising him salvation in our sympathetic gaze. Audience interest in Alvarez's life seems almost philanthropic.(69)

Another 1989 Union ad from the *New York Times* featured former POW Eastern Airline pilots using their revered status as an ideological ploy in a dispute against corporate head Frank Lorenzo. Lorenzo is now the oppressor. Seen against an American flag, the Union obviously wishes to use their former POW employees to appropriate the same symbols their "oppressor" uses. But, as Gruner notes, a \$65,000 salary hardly makes these figures representatives of class struggle: "If these people are prisoners of Frank Lorenzo, they are perhaps better kept than other prisoners." (75). Furthermore, a white male bourgeois organization wishes a "piece of the pie," using a "discredited and painful struggle as a paradigm for current union-management dysfunction."(77).

A welcome feature of Gruner's work is his emphasis upon gender. Noting problems confronting Mark Robson's *Limbo* (1972) dealing with activist wives and girlfriends of POWs, Gruner notes the Nixon administration's attempt to keep families silent. Gender roles became reversed with males as passive captives causing an affront to American masculine values. Popular accounts tend to downplay and neglect the role of women as either captives or activists. Certain narratives were late in appearing because they contradicted traditional expectations. However, as Sybil Stockdale's portion of *In Love and War* and Dorothy McDaniel's *After the Hero's Welcome* show, women were expected to fall back into defined roles after POW return. A gender bias influences these narratives. Whether white or Vietnamese, women may also be seen as either enemies or betraying wives like Chloe Alvarez, successors of *The Scarlet Letter's* Hester Prynne. (93, 108).

Ironically, while females were the central protagonists in classical Captivity Narratives they became ignored, marginalized, or exploited within twentieth century representations.

Captive women seldom learned anything worth talking about. Whereas captivity had given male POWs of the Vietnam War a privileged voice and a special knowledge of God, family and self, female captivity seemed to hold none of that same interest. Captivity for a woman had a functional importance with pornographic implications, but no epistemological value.(110)

Unlike traditional male captivity narratives, the female version neither empowered nor enlightened but

involved demeaning devices of apology and compensation for imprisonment. Naturally, women were not important for post-1973 ideological structures. Examining the usually neglected Monika Schwinn's *We Came to Help* and Kate Webb's *On the Other Side*, Gruner discovers a revealing gender bias within POW narratives: "She (Kate Webb) cannot find a structure, a figuration of a woman's captivity, the scaffolding to deal psychologically with the experience. The lack of previous experience robs her of any effective role she might play in the captivity drama."(118)

However, depictions of female vulnerability and sexual mistreatment are rare (or non-existent) in actual recorded cases involving women captors. Despite racist and nationalist assumptions in male captivity narratives seeing the enemy as sexually depraved beasts, "the offenders in the molestation and exploitation of women were the Americans and not the Vietnamese." (123). Although neither side respected gender boundaries, the supposed descendants of the Yellow Peril were actually more disciplined when dealing with Western women, avoiding gender differences while male American prisoners actually emphasized them! Also, racially offensive stereotypical characterizations in narratives written by Plumb, Mulligan, and others represent productions of an elite college-educated class priding themselves on being bearers of American values. (134)

Thoroughly examining selected narratives, Gruner proves his case. The POW narratives are not realistic depictions. They are ideological power-knowledge productions attempting to reaffirm lost American values whereby the "POWs created order and meaning for their debilitating experience in Hanoi. It is about the cultural logic of representation and myth." (144). These supposedly factual narratives express experiences within "the context of coherent structures that make sense of the otherwise incomprehensible events of their captivity." (147). They parallel some Holocaust narratives in which "the act of writing itself affirms the present self at the expense of the experience itself." (149). Like old soldier narratives they have little to do with reality. In fact, they are constructed modes of storytelling dominating the present having "less to do with the actual experience than with the superstructure of ideology or belief" (161). Gruner's penultimate chapter, "The Consequences of Myth," reveals the ideological nexus behind the popularity of POWs on the lecture circuit during the 80s and early 90s. When the speaker appeals to an audience stating they are all captives, he is appealing to "an accepted and tried ingredient of American character" (163) within well-defined "existing systems of power". (164). Based upon, but never explicitly emphasizing, well-known devices of radical post-structuralism, Gruner's ruthlessly questions the mythic structures behind these narratives. They are allied with carefully structured institutional codes still operating today claiming our consent, but really forcing us to serve corporate, military, and government interests.

Easily consumed rules and codes are satisfying because they give us a simple pretext and justification for

being and acting consistently within the existing order. Such structures are tremendously attractive because they simplify complex problems that seem to overwhelm us. The POW story was and is attractive, in part, because it simplifies the otherwise confusing terms of a war we have yet to understand.(166)

By returning to an America ready to use and abuse them, the POWs lost the identities they tried to retain and became imprisoned within a manipulative American culture. Concluding with Gulf War propaganda attempting to reverse the Viet Nam syndrome, Gruner shows that "orchestrated propaganda" shows were not peculiar to the Viet Nam war. Franklin demonstrates the historical level, while Gruner reveals the dangerous mechanisms on the cultural level seeking to again use myth for conservative ends.

Craig Howes's *Voices of the Vietnam POWs* provides valuable supplementary material. It also covers similar ground—the construction of the POW narrative, the cultural heritage of the Puritan Captivity Narrative, and citations to Foucault's work. Far from celebrating the official version, Howes interrogates its main sources with detailed references to newspapers and primary source material. Covering issues such as the Prisoner's Code of Conduct, the Official Story, individual narratives (Stockdale, Dramesi, Garwood etc) and contradictions to attempted unitary visions of captivity, Howes provides detailed information as to how a particular POW narrative emerged after Operation Homecoming. As he points out, certain sources were privileged and others neglected. POWs did not really represent the realistic proportions of their service branches: "'Top Heavy' thus seems only a barely adequate description of the Operation Homecoming POWs. Only 79 (out of 565) weren't commissioned officers, and only 16 were privates. Most astounding of all, not a single Homecoming POW had been drafted."(4)

This prepares us to understand that particular Viet Nam war captivity narratives represent cultural productions from a particular class and educational background. Howes also notes a difference between the more officer-populated confines of the Hanoi Hilton and serviceman jungle camps. While conditions at Hoa Loa Prison were never lavish, it was a Hilton in comparison to the jungle camps where conditions were more life-threatening. Thus Hanoi was actually "the Harvard of POW camps" (7) in this respect. Most narratives actually marginalize or ignore the jungle camps. As Howes notes, "Though many memoirs and histories downplay this fact, a Hanoi prisoner was far less likely to die than a jungle POW."(6). But Operation Homecoming saw the beginning of a type of narrative construction that would soon become the dominant norm in an official version of Viet Nam captivity narratives. Howes's book describes the particular form these narratives took, a form actually begun by captives in patriotic rehearsal speeches in Hanoi itself, a process some disgruntled POWs described as "reverse brainwashing." Back home, an official mythology began affirming American values, attacking dissidents, aided and abetted by the POWs' championship of Richard Nixon. Despite the supposed spontaneous auto-

biographical nature of many Viet Nam captivity narratives, they were actually works benefiting from a particular highly rehearsed mode of cultural processing both in prison and at home: "Who were the POWs? The most visible men were proud, patriotic, and largely white career military officers who had shared in captivity the desire and the time necessary to get their story straight."(13).

Howes examines the 1955 Fighting Man's Code issued after the supposedly disgraceful behavior of Korean War POWs, interrogating its clauses and showing how often its stipulations were either impossible to realize or became life-threatening to prisoners. During the 1968 Pueblo Incident, Commander Bucher and his men realized how impossible the codes demands were. As he stated, "Better to confess to the enemy's accusations, the more outrageous the better, showing him up as a liar and a cheat, than to risk torture and death." Even following an officer's duty to escape could place the remaining prisoners in danger. Contradictions existed between the Hanoi Hilton and jungle camps. Many jungle POWs found the Hanoi Hilton adopted prisoner regulations difficult to follow when they were transferred there after 1969. Contradicting Foucault's ideas concerning modern disciplinary institutions, they often faced two set of rules, the Vietnamese and the hierarchical American officer corps there. Many servicemen reacted against the rules and regulations set up by their more prestigious prisoners.

Although noting the omissions of South Vietnamese atrocities in most POW narratives, Howes states that the North Vietnamese did torture prisoners. Though common, it was never a universal practice. Following Ho Chi Minh's death, torture diminished. But it became a major item within the POW mythology. In many cases, certain POWs expected and demanded torture to prove they were actually at war guaranteeing their return home as heroes. (70) Differences also existed between senior POWs who kept aloof from their guards and the younger newcomers transferred after 1969. Despite the homogenous nature of most narratives, captivity experiences were never universal. The circumstances depended upon time, place, and personalities. However, an "official story" soon developed designed to promote American values and deny dangerous contradictions as shown by the 1973 Reader's Digest Press Publication, *P.O.W.: A Definitive History of the American Prisoner-of-War Experience in Vietnam, 1964-1973*.

In examining the overall picture of captivity, Howes notes that most captivity narratives are really generic productions with similarities to both the Puritan captivity myth and salvation discourses such as *The Divine Comedy*, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, and John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Here his work complements Franklin and Gruner. As Gruner also shows, the narratives are conditioned by virulent depictions of race and gender totally oblivious to parallel aspects within American culture itself. Noting one account of a supposedly depraved North Vietnamese female setting a dog alight, Howes comments, "Some bored American

layabouts set fire to a dog in *Huckleberry Finn*, and the napalm released from the POWs planes notoriously had the same effect on people." (128) Following their Puritan ancestors, many captives maintained a strict spiritual apartheid refusing to learn Vietnamese language and culture fearing contamination.

All these linguistic barricades tended to make anyone who could erase them suspect. Robert Garwood's jungle skills and fluency in Vietnamese seemed to arouse as much hatred in the other jungle POWs as any real evidence of treason. (133)

Many pilots, often rescued by North Vietnamese military and cadres, failed to understand the anger villagers showed against them, attributing it to Communist brainwashing. Howes again, ironically, notes, "Personal injury, national pride, a hatred of colonialism, or even the napalm dropped twenty minutes earlier therefore played little part in motivating the Vietnamese enemy." (149) Aspects of caste and rank were important to officers. Richard Stratton forced enlisted man Douglas Hegdahl to accept early release after programming his memory. Having served his purpose, Hegdahl then disappeared into the margins like a working-class servant of an upper-caste World War I officer.

After examining the antiwar captives of the Peace Committee (a group Stockdale and others argued, in vain, for court-martial proceedings against) and the elusive figure of Robert Garwood, Howes deals with the major "official" figure of James Bond Stockdale. While not wishing to minimize the ordeals Stockdale and other POWs endured, Howes' chapter reveals the ideological, cultural, educational, and political factors molding his personality. Raised on a Western classical literary and philosophical canon which sustained him during captivity and afterwards, Stockdale saw no contradiction between dropping napalm from his plane, following Barry Goldwater's hawkish attitudes towards Viet Nam, and reverently selecting a Great Books list on becoming President of the Naval War College in 1982. (Characteristically, the authors are all white males.) After over twenty pages of the Stockdale saga, Howes draws similar conclusions to those of Franklin and Gruner, noting *In Love and War's* role as a weapon in a "fight for meaning, and the nation's tradition of waging it.." (256).

Appearing in the University Press of Kansas's Modern War Studies series (whose editorial board contains two figures with current military connections), written by a former naval intelligence officer, *Voices of Captivity* appears very much an "official story" work—and stands in contrast to the books discussed above. Covering captivity narratives from the Puritan Era to the Gulf War, Doyle provides a comprehensive overview with quoted selections from various eras such as the Revolutionary War, the Mexican-American War, and the Civil War in a book comprised of some 370 pages. Despite the material presented, the book is limited in its approach. A forward by former captive Giles A. Norrington describes the captivity experience as necessitating "a new vocabulary" allowing the survivors "to bear witness" (6) but under-

stands captivity literature as being a "genre of perceptions and truths drawn directly from personal experience." Unlike Franklin, Gruner, and Howes, Doyle ignores the social, ideological, and cultural factors instrumental in forming POW/MIA literature as well as marginalizing and ignoring contradictions to the imagery. Despite occasional references to Richard Slotkin's *Regeneration Through Violence*, the book lacks the relevant critical and theoretical tools for understanding how personal histories and narratives are formed.

Readers may approach the Doyle work for its compilation of historical information and little-known facts, such as Doyle's mention of a radical African-American Revolutionary war POW ("King Dick"), [15-16] and Santa Anna's American Irish Brigade later punished by former 1812 POW General Winfield Scott during the Mexican-American War. But the material needs deeper interrogation and analysis. Doyle treats the material as objective accounts and never analyzes the forces instrumental in their construction. Despite citing Clifford Geertz's ideas within *The Interpretation of Culture* (1973) concerning approaching culture in terms of institutional forms and despite noting that "prisoners from colonial times to Vietnam have styled their messages within a set of recognized, understandable, temporal, contextual, sequential, and categorical boundaries" (81), Doyle's approach is formalist. He regards "POW narratives as perceptually true" (284) without investigating the forces influencing perception and meaning.

More disturbing is his treatment of H. Bruce Franklin's work. Describing Franklin as "[W]riting from a distinctly Marxist view," (266) he allows this judgement to color his understanding of the work, refusing to examine the consequences of the empirical historical material Franklin cites in showing how a particular mode of perception arises. Franklin combines an empiricist approach with critique. Doyle's empiricism never rises to the more appropriate critical methods employed by Franklin, Gruner, and Howes. Further damning evidence against Doyle can be found in his designation of Franklin as representing the "old antiwar constituency" (270) as if that issue alone refuted the factual evidence contained in *M.I.A. and Mythmaking*.

Most of the thirteen chapters follow the same boring chronological pattern with opening statements and closing resolutions and no analytic interrogation. Despite mentioning female combatants and prisoners (287-291), Doyle exhibits little knowledge of gender studies which would illuminate his findings. He concludes his work with the belief that "the voices from captivity...will continue to find a special place in the American experience." (295). They are to remain as an eternal part of the cultural experience. Far more challenging are the perspectives presented by Franklin, Gruner, and Howes who see the whole experience as pathological and regressive hindering movement towards progressive changes within American society.

25 YEARS AGO: US TROOPS REBEL IN HAWAII

Via NY Transfer News Collective—"All the News that Doesn't Fit"

[Note from NY Transfer News Colective: The media is reviving a little nostalgia about 1969. It's not the Black Panthers, the Young Lords or the combative anti-war movement that are getting publicity. It's the rock festival near Woodstock, N.Y. This was supposed to be the cultural event defining a generation.

In keeping with our celebration of Workers World's 35th anniversary, we looked back to the Aug. 28, 1969, issue of Workers World to see how we covered Woodstock. Nothing. A search through files showed that we did indeed have comrades attending the concert—they distributed leaflets asking for support for arrested Black Panther leader Bobby Seale. The article from which we reprint excerpts here covers two aspects of the growing collapse of the imperialist U.S. military from rebellion within its ranks. One was the spread of Black rebellion to service members. The other was the overall disgust with the war waged against the Vietnamese people. The site of both struggles was Hawaii.]

By Ellen Pierce

Honolulu—On arriving in Hawaii, one can easily see why U.S. imperialism was so anxious to secure these Pacific islands as a state. The islands are a veritable fortress of the Pentagon, a jumping-off point for military expeditions and aggression in Asia, with over 100,000 GIs stationed at Air Force, Marine, Army and Navy installations. It was in the strategic spot that Black and white servicemen, in two separate struggles, have begun a highly significant rebellion against military racism and the imperialist war against Vietnam.

On Aug. 6, Louis "Buff" Parry resigned from the U.S. Air Force and took sanctuary at a Honolulu church to protest the war. Within two weeks, 23 other enlisted men had resigned from the Army, Navy and Marines and joined Parry in sanctuary at the Church of the Crossroads.

In a statement on his action, Parry explained, "I have chosen to fulfill this duty to humanity by leaving the U.S. Air Force and seeking sanctuary at the Church of the Crossroads. And I have chosen this day, the Sixth of August, 24 years after the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, to share the grief that is felt by the Hiroshimans."

Parry's stand, which started out as an act of individual protest, expressed the anti-war feelings of so many GIs that it inspired others to join in a quickly growing action.

Three days after Parry entered sanctuary, on the anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, an anti-war rally the dropping of the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, an anti-war rally was held by Hawaii Resistance. A spokesman for the American Servicemen's Union read the audience of almost 500 (the largest such demonstration in Hawaii so far) the demands of his union

for racial equality in the armed forces, election of officers, the right of collective bargaining and the right to refuse illegal orders, such as orders to fight in Vietnam.

Victory for Black Marines

While this protest by white GIs was unfolding, Black Marines at the Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station, 10 miles from here, staged a powerful demonstration of their own on Aug. 10. What started as a fight against a group of white racist Marines developed into a rebellion by the Black Marines against discriminatory job assignments, racist MPs and other forms of racist harassment.

The Black uprising so shook the Marine base that the brass were forced to meet with representatives of the Afro-Americans to discuss a list of grievances. The usual investigation was ordered into the conditions that led to the rebellion (as if the Marine Corps officers didn't know about their own racist policies).

Meanwhile, disciplinary action is being threatened. In spite of the threats, however, the mere fact that the military was forced to meet with a Black delegation was an unprecedented victory. ...

In a show of solidarity, the GIs in sanctuary sent a warm message to their brothers at Kaneohe:

"We, the community of sanctuary at Crossroads Church, applaud the determination of our Black brothers at Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station to gain the rights which are theirs as human beings. ... We call upon all our white brothers in the service to recognize the racial discrimination imposed on the Blacks by the military establishment, and to join their brothers in demanding their rights. ..."

In another unprecedented show of solidarity, supporters of the white GIs organized demonstrations at Kaneohe on Aug. 14 and Aug. 15. Members of the American Servicemen's Union and Hawaii Resistance carrying signs of solidarity with the Black Marines' rebellion marched outside the military installation.

From behind the base gates, they were greeted by clenched fists from the Black Marines and V-signs from sympathetic white GIs.

The events here amount to a political strike by servicemen. The sanctuary struggle, along with the rebellion by Black GIs at several bases and the efforts to unionize enlisted men as a force against the brass, all are making a serious dent in imperialism's aims for the conquest of Asia and South America.

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THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN CAMBRIDGE, MD DURING THE 1960s

By Peter B. Levy, Dept. of History, York College, York, PA 17405. (The paper was presented at the Sixties Generations Conference, Danbury, CT, November 4-6, 1994.)

For the public at large the 1960s has become synonymous with Vietnam and the counterculture. When conservative critics decry the decade as the root of all that is wrong today they clearly refer to the turmoil that was located primarily at college campuses and precipitated by white middle class students.¹ Yet, any serious student must recognize that the struggle for racial equality was the central dynamic force and should also be the issue by which we determine the achievements and failures of the era. Sit-ins staged by black students ignited the protest of the Sixties; grass roots and national demonstrations for freedom and equity produced the two most significant pieces of legislation; and urban riots and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. muted the idealism of the times and ushered in a call for revolution.

While a great deal of good work on the civil rights movement has already been done, specialists in the field have begun to call for a revision of the standard cannon, one which generally follows the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. and portrays the decade as one of racial progress. Such a revision, they argue, should be based upon an examination of the movement from a community or local perspective. By developing such studies, they contend, we can move beyond the notion of the movement as a protest "orchestrated by national leaders in order to achieve national civil rights legislation," to borrow Clayborne Carson's words. Rather than being "narrowly aimed at obtaining legal victories from the federal government," we will see that its aim was nothing less than the creation of "new social identities," or the empowerment of men and women whose sense of self and personhood had been degraded or stunted by years of repression.²

Moreover, some have suggested that local studies will reveal that "the victories won by protests were less dramatic and less complete" than they have generally been portrayed. As Robert Norrell has written: "If one were to make a documentary film of the civil rights struggle in Greensboro or Montgomery or St. Augustine or Tuskegee [four communities for which case studies exist] the narrative line would be "exceedingly long, exhaustively crooked and extensively smudged." Local studies, these authors add, will also allow historians to better understand why the movement developed when it did and why certain communities erupted while others did not.³

In general, this essay, which focuses on the black freedom struggle in Cambridge, Maryland during the 1960s, supports the view that community studies will improve our understanding of the civil rights years. It confirms that the course of the movement was "crooked and extensively smudged." It demonstrates that personal empowerment or the creation of new social identi-

ties, not federal legislation, was the main goal and perhaps the main achievement of the struggle. And it adds weight to the suggestion that structural forces more than individual actions best explain the timing and whereabouts of the movement. In addition, this essay contributes to the growing body of literature on the significant role that women played in the struggle for racial equality. In the early 1960s, the most important black leader in Cambridge was not a minister, student, lawyer, nor a man. Rather blacks in Cambridge rallied around the leadership of Gloria Richardson, a middle-aged native to the region. Along the same lines, this study should prompt students of the civil rights movement to think twice before they characterize it as a struggle primarily for and by the black middle class, because in Cambridge the black poor or working class played a leading role.⁴

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

If you were to have visited Cambridge, population 13,000, as the 1960s dawned, you might have noted a sign at the edge of town that read: "Cambridge isn't just any place, it's a people making progress." Your first impression of the community, the county seat of Dorchester County on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, probably would have corroborated this boast.⁵ Though Cambridge had a Southern look and feel, the city was not of the Deep South. Ever since the Civil War, it had been tied economically to the North, via the railroad lines that ran from New York, Philadelphia and Wilmington and then down the Delmarva peninsula. Blacks continued to vote after Reconstruction and since the turn of the century one of Cambridge's five town councilmen had been black. Blacks worked as policemen—Cambridge integrated its police force before Baltimore—and the local school board had passed a plan to desegregate the schools shortly after the *Brown* decision. Moreover, the local economy revolved around manufacturing, not cotton farming. No wonder that a federally funded documentary film, narrated by newscaster Chet Huntley, called Cambridge a "model city" in terms of interracial relations.⁶

A quick reading of the town's newspaper would have uncovered little evidence that Cambridge was about to embark on its most tumultuous decade in its long history. Based on the 1960 election results and the tone of the campaign, the town's citizens displayed little concern with racial matters. Unlike many small towns throughout the South, the desegregation of schools was not a major issue. Hardly any discussion of the sit-ins, including some in nearby Princess Anne and Salisbury, took place. Indeed, extensive interviews conducted at the time by George R. Kent, a black teacher at a local high school and a graduate student at the University of Maryland, suggested that the even the bulk of the black community remained content with the city's black and white moderate leadership.⁷

The issue that concerned Cambridge's citizens the most was the economy. In 1957, Consolidated Foods of Chicago had purchased the Phillips Packing Company,

by far and away the largest employer in the region. At its peak during World War II, Phillips had employed between 1,000 and 4,000 workers a year, about one-half of them in one of its eleven Cambridge plants. By the time Consolidated Foods bought Phillips, however, its payroll and profits had shrunk considerably. Unemployment ran between 7 and 11 percent, for whites, and between 20 and 30 percent, for blacks. (Employment in the packing-house or canning factories was always very seasonal. It was the lowest in the late fall following the tomato harvest and the highest in the spring planting season.)⁸

Nonetheless, as the election of Calvin Mowbray to the post of mayor revealed, Cambridge's citizenry believed that it could overcome these difficulties with the help of enlightened leadership. Mowbray, a former president of the chamber of commerce and an officer with Consolidated Food, easily defeated Osvey Pritchett, a plumbing supplier, by promising to build on the efforts of Cambridge's business elite. This elite was in the midst of a campaign to recruit new industries to the region, an effort which was already beginning to pay dividends. At no point did either Mowbray or his opponent suggest that racial matters would hamper Cambridge's economic revival. On the contrary, Mowbray, who won the vast majority of the black vote, presumed that Cambridge's reputation as a progressive community in terms of race relations would bolster its ability to attract new business. The decision of the Voluntary Rescue and Fire Company to build the single largest private swimming pool on the East coast further reflected Cambridge's belief that it was on the road to economic recovery.⁹ This faith that economic conditions would continue to improve carried into and through 1961. As the Cambridge *Daily Banner* reported in its end of the year issue, "By almost any barometer, 1961 was a good year for the community. Unemployment was down. New industry produced new jobs. Retail merchants rang up record sales." Moreover, the paper continued, "the prospect of exciting growth faced the community. An expanded port, more industrial plants, dualization of Route 50, a city beltway" Nowhere in this year-end review did the paper mention the civil rights movement, in general, or racial problems in Cambridge, in particular. During the year the newspaper had condemned the actions of white supremacists in Alabama and elsewhere and suggested that Cambridge could never experience similar turmoil.¹⁰ Ironically, few in Cambridge knew that freedom rides with their town's name on them, were being organized by the Civic Interest Group (CIG), of Baltimore, SNCC and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) at that very same time.

THE STRUGGLE BEGINS

Without a doubt the freedom rides ignited the civil rights movement in Cambridge. They broke the racial calm that marked race relations in the community and gave rise to nearly a decade of sustained protest.¹¹ For example, the first rides, which took place on Saturday January 13, 1962, produced the following scene, described by SNCC activist Reginald Robinson:

The streets of Cambridge were lined with a great many jeering whites. Negroes also crowded the streets.... A number of incidents happened all over the downtown area. Picketers were shoved and jostled quite frequently. The most serious incident happened at the Choptank Inn. Bill [Hansen] and another demonstrator were the only two who got inside the restaurant. On the outside... a crowd of about 150 very hostile whites gathered. Approximately fifty near hysterical people were on the inside.... The mob on the inside converged on Bill and started beating him. He was thrown bodily out of the door. He got up and entered the restaurant again. This time he was knocked down again, and kicked out of the door. When he tried to enter a third time he was again knocked down. At this juncture he was arrested for disorderly conduct, by a state policeman who had been standing nearby watching the entire proceeding.¹²

Not surprisingly, local whites blamed outsiders for this unrest and that which followed. The Cambridge *Daily Banner*, for one, described Hansen as a professional integrationist who had no knowledge of Cambridge's progressive racial record, and warned that the protestors "jeopardized ... four decades of bi-racial progress in Cambridge." Yet such an analysis failed to acknowledge that the riders received a very warm reception from the black community which had been poised for such an eruption by years of injustice. Approximately 300 men and women attended a mass meeting at St. Luke's A.M.E. church following the rides; on the following Monday scores of students from the all-black Mace Lane High School showed their solidarity with the activists by walking out of their afternoon classes to attend the riders' court hearings. Reverend John Ringold summarized the views of many of those present:

It has been reported that 'until the outsiders came to Cambridge the colored people were satisfied.' I ask, 'satisfied' with what? The truth is that we have never been satisfied and unrest has been mounting for several years.... Something or someone was needed to stir the people to action and move them to reveal that dissatisfaction. The inspiration was brought by the first rally of the Freedom Riders.¹³

Further proof of the local black community's position came during two more freedom rides, in the month of January.

Despite the fact that the rides had little impact on the town's commercial facilities—none desegregated,—they gave rise to a new determination in the black community to challenge the racial status quo. Blacks attended mass meetings on a regular basis and encouraged their fellow citizens to speak out. James Shields, for instance, declared: "They [protesters] are doing something that our people should have done a 100 years ago. Some day our children will be able to say, 'I wish my father could have lived as I do.'" In addition, out of these protests emerged the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC).

Although this insurgency appeared to spring out of thin air, in fact it built on a number of small steps that the black community had already made. Even though Cambridge's black ministers proved reluctant to openly

support the freedom riders, their churches provided a base or staging ground for mobilizing the black community. When the churches closed their doors, blacks coalesced at the Elks Lodge, another indigenous all-black institution. The burst of activism in Cambridge also built upon the resources and leadership of Cambridge's most prominent black family, the St. Clair's. The St. Clair family member who played the most important role was Gloria Richardson.

The granddaughter of Herbert "Maynadier" St. Clair, Cambridge's black town councilman for nearly forty years, Richardson had graduated with a degree in sociology from Howard University in 1942. While there she had studied with E. Franklin Frazier, Rayford Logan and Highland Lewis, three giants of black academia. These relatively radical professors helped shape her views of race relations, perhaps prompting her to reject the privileges of the black bourgeoisie and certainly raising her own self-esteem. Based upon her training and family reputation, she returned to Cambridge with the expectation of finding a job in her field. Instead she ran smack into the color barrier, namely that Cambridge did not employ black social workers. As a result she found only menial work. This personal experience with racism, combined with previous experiences that even her "elite" family had encountered, intensified her resolve to fight for full equality.

Under Richardson's and CORE veteran Enez Grubb's lead, CNAC expanded the scope of its protests. It enlarged its boycott of white owned businesses, held voter registration and education drives, and pushed the school board to speed up its desegregation plan. CNAC also affiliated with SNCC, becoming the only adult-run branch of this student-based group. Most importantly, Richardson built CNAC into one of the few civil rights organizations in the country with strong support from poor or working class blacks. One way Richardson did this was by shunning the conciliatory or "Tomish" black leaders of Cambridge, such as councilman Charles Cornish, Edythe Jolley, the principal of the all-black Mace Lane High School, and Helen Waters, the black representative on the county-wide school board. (Waters owned a beauty parlor which catered to whites only.) Richardson also won support through the sheer strength of her personality, a trait which both her supporters and detractors highlighted.¹⁴

THE FIRES OF DISCORD

If the local white elite had negotiated an agreement to desegregate public accommodations, if it had convinced the school board to speed up the desegregation of schools, or if it had demonstrated a desire to treat blacks as equals, then Cambridge's history might have turned out differently. But it did not. Despite the obvious need for aid, a plan to apply to the federal government for public housing got nowhere because of a squabble between the county commissioners and the town government, perhaps motivated by the commissioners' desire to protect investments some of them had made in property in the all black second ward. As late as January 1963

Mayor Mowbray refused to ask the town council to pass some sort of public accommodation law, even though several Eastern Shore communities already had one. The school board did not budge on its desegregation plan, contending that the schools were open if blacks would only apply. (In the fall of 1962 Gloria Richardson's daughter Donna applied to and was admitted to the previously all-white High School. But less than two weeks after enrolling she left because of the open hostility she encountered among the white students, teachers and staff. Richardson contended that other blacks did not apply because they feared economic reprisals for doing so.) Indeed, rather than acknowledge flaws in the desegregation plan or race relations in general, School Superintendent James G. Busick and other white officials blamed the turmoil in the community solely on outside agitators. If the freedom riders would just leave, or if Richardson would just act reasonably, they contended, Cambridge would peacefully work out its racial problems.¹⁵

To make matters worse, the black unemployment rate remained abysmal, above 20%, over twice as high as that for Cambridge's whites and four times the national average. The housing situation was even worse. Only 18.8% of all blacks in Cambridge had sound plumbing, compared to over 80% of the white population. The median value of homes owned by blacks was one-half that of homes owned by whites, and only a bit over one-quarter of all of Cambridge's blacks owned a home at all, compared to over 55% of white families.¹⁶ Several of Cambridge's poor put the meaning of these conditions in human terms: James Sloan, an unemployed Korean War veteran stated: "Here, if you are a colored person and go looking for a job, they tell you they only want skilled workers. If you have the particular skill the vacancy suddenly 'has been filled.'" Henry James added: "Things for us can't get any worse. We have nothing to lose and maybe something to gain by backing them [the civil rights movement]. I don't have anything but time and my life to give to the movement. I'm willing to give both if necessary."¹⁷

A statewide fight for civil rights legislation and the actions of the local all-white volunteer fire company exacerbated the situation. All of Dorchester County's representatives vociferously opposed Maryland Governor Tawes' proposed public accommodations bill, despite the fact that Dorchester County was to be exempted from its provisions under an archaic loophole in the state constitution. After the bill was passed, Eastern Shoresmen led a drive to repeal it via a referendum, despite the fact that the law did not apply to them.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the fire company continued to operate its new large swimming pool on a segregated basis, forcing blacks to swim in the polluted Choptank River, where nearly every season one or two of them drowned. (During later riots the Fire Company refused to put out fires in the all-black second ward until forced to do so by the Mayor.)¹⁹

As a result, even before Martin Luther King Jr. and SCLC launched Project C in Birmingham, Alabama, CNAC commenced a new phase of its own protests. Like

their counterparts in Birmingham, activists in Cambridge gathered at churches in the black section of town, marched downtown where they sang freedom songs, prayed, and then, assuming there were no arrests, returned to church for another meeting. Even more so than SCLC in Birmingham, CNAC augmented its marches by picketing segregated establishments and testing facilities. When arrested, the activists often chose jail over bail. Local high school students, organized by Gloria Richardson's daughter Donna, and students from Swarthmore, Morgan State and other regional colleges and universities constituted the bulk of the demonstrators. Unlike Birmingham, Cambridge's blacks protested in relative anonymity until May 1963. Without the attraction of either Martin Luther King Jr. or "Bull" Connor, they failed to gain national headlines.²⁰

This stage of the demonstrations reached a peak with the so-called "penny trials." On May 7, 1963, fifty-four civil rights activists including Gloria Richardson were tried together in Dorchester County Circuit Court by Judge W. Laird Henry Jr., one of the most distinguished and prominent whites in the community. Henry's father had been a Judge and a Congressman and one of his great-great grandfathers had signed the Declaration of Independence. Ironically, the Henry's and St. Clair's were rumored to be related by blood. After hearing a brief summary of the evidence, Henry found 47 of the defendants guilty of one count and 7 of the defendants guilty of two counts of disorderly conduct. After dismissing all of the remaining charges, Henry fined each defendant one penny and then suspended their sentences. In the midst of the proceedings, Henry reprimanded the activists for their deplorable behavior. "Your time," Judge Henry informed the college students, "would be more profitably spent in your books than in ... making nuisances of yourselves." After finishing this part of his lecture Henry turned his attention to Richardson, lambasting her for ruining her family's good name. Then Henry reiterated the white elite's standard refrain: Cambridge is trying hard "to do what is good for you and your people. Do you know of any other community in this area making greater strides in integration than Cambridge?" To which Richardson replied, "You are not going to like this but I think far greater progress is being made in Salisbury," a comment she knew would pique Henry's anger given Salisbury poor reputation on racial matters. (Salisbury had been the site of an infamous lynching during the 1930s. There is no record of any similar lynching in Cambridge during the twentieth century.)²¹

Not only did Henry fail to "put Richardson in her place," his simultaneous efforts to get white restaurant owners to negotiate collapsed.²² When Cambridge's authorities arrested two young local black activists, Dwight Cromwell and Dinez White, and charged them with disorderly conduct and threw them in jail without bail (their actual offense was praying outside a bowling alley) and when Judge Duer, a symbol of racial repression on the Eastern shore, subsequently sentenced them to an indefinite term in the state institution for juvenile delinquents, tensions reached a new height. Prior to receiving her sentence Dinez White wrote her own "Letter

From a Jail Cell," which, like Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "Letter from a Birmingham Jail Cell," urged her fellow activists to persevere. "They think they have you scared because they are sending us away," she wrote. "Please fight for freedom and let us know that we are not going away in vain."²³

On the same day that White and Cromwell were sentenced, the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations, which had rushed to Cambridge with the hope of averting a riot, issued a pessimistic report on the situation.²⁴ Not surprisingly, events soon fulfilled the commission's findings. From June 11th through June 14th all hell broke loose—guns were fired, buildings were set on fire, and several whites were shot. By June 14th events were so out of control that the town council and the mayor felt compelled to call in the National Guard. Governor Tawes immediately complied with this request. Approximately 500 guards rushed into town and up to 1500 more readied themselves for action. Armed with bayonets and equipped with rifles and tear gas, the soldiers encamped themselves on Cambridge's main artery, ironically named Race Street. Race Street actually divided the black Second Ward from the white wards of Cambridge. Historically, residential segregation had provided one of the main means for maintaining social order. In the summer of 1963, however, only the military which imposed martial law could do so.²⁵

A flurry of activity followed the mid-June riots. The town council offered to pass an amendment to the city charter which would make discrimination illegal in the town's hotels, inns, and restaurants. CNAC's leaders met with Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshal, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and Governor Tawes. A brief interlude of peace convinced Governor Tawes to withdraw the National Guard, but no sooner had they departed then violence erupted again. A sit-in at Dizzyland gained national headlines when the restaurant's owner Robert Fehsenfeld knocked Eric Dickerson, a white native and member of CNAC, to the ground and cracked a raw egg over his head. In response to this attack and others, CNAC staged a series of night-time mass marches to the downtown courthouse. Following one of these marches a car full of whites raced through the black second ward, and its passengers sprayed bullets at nearby residences. Soon thereafter another riot erupted. George Collins, a writer for the *Afro-American*, wrote:²⁶ For what seemed like an eternity the Second Ward was a replica of the Old West as men and boys of all ages roamed the streets, stood in the shadows, and leaned out of windows with their weapons in full view. By dawn over 12 people had been shot. It was only through an act of God, (Collins added), that no one was killed. In the midst of the violence, the Governor ordered the National Guard to return.²⁷

Even before this new round of disorder, the Kennedy administration had expanded its mediation efforts. On July 9th, Gloria Richardson attended a White House function with leaders of 300 other women's organizations. Before joining the group, she met privately with Kennedy administrator Maceo Hubbard, a long-time civil rights lawyer and the top black official in the Justice

Department. At the same time, General George Gelston, commander of the troops in Cambridge, State Attorney Thomas Finnan and members of the Maryland Humans Relations Commission conferred with local black and white leaders. On the 22nd of July, the federal government's efforts culminated with an announcement by Attorney General Robert Kennedy that representatives of the black community, city and state of Maryland, and the Justice Department had signed an "Agreement," whereby CNAC would suspend protests in exchange for "material and tangible" reforms. Said reforms included the establishment of a Human Relations Commission, of which four blacks were to be members, the hiring of a black as an interviewer by the local branch of the Department of Employment Security of the State of Maryland, the amendment of the city charter (which would make it illegal to discriminate against individuals because of their race in public accommodations), the speeding up of desegregation in the schools and the building of public housing. In other words the agreement met most, if not all, of the concrete demands made by CNAC when it first appeared on the scene in 1962 and which the town council had refused or been unable to implement as late as May 1963.²⁸

The Collapse of the "Vital Center"

The signing of the "agreement", however, did not signal an end to Cambridge's racial problems. Nearly all of the parties involved realized that the agreement rested upon precarious grounds, especially since pro-segregationists in the community had declared they would challenge the city's charter amendment via a referendum. At no time did this segment of the community concede to withdraw its opposition to restrictions which affected the operation of private businesses. Indeed, within a month the pro-segregationists had collected 1700 signatures, over one-half of all of the registered white voters of Cambridge and well over the 900 signatures needed to place the charter amendment on the ballot. Not surprisingly, a number of restaurant owners, other small businessmen and members of the Cambridge Rescue and Fire Company spearheaded the petition drive and subsequent referendum campaign.²⁹

Cambridge's local elites, operating under the appellation the Cambridge Citizens Committee, led the effort to defeat the referendum, and thus to uphold the anti-discrimination charter amendment. Headed by Arnold Deane, owner of the Cambridge *Daily Banner*, William Hart, president of the local Chamber of Commerce, J. Edward Walter, Postmaster of Cambridge and Levi Phillips, Jr., an attorney and the son of one of the co-founders of the Phillips Packing Company, the committee emphasized that passage of the referendum would threaten the "economic welfare of the city." To drive home this point, Mayor Mowbray sent a letter to every individual who had signed the pro-referendum petition in which he declared that continued strife would cost Cambridge jobs.³⁰

As the final days of the campaign approached, the battle between the two sides reached a fever pitch.

Segregationists countered Mayor Mowbray's personal letter with large advertisements in the *Daily Banner*, one of which announced: "Where Do You Draw the Line on Forced Integration?" First they will integrate public accommodations, then integration would come in other areas of life, including "churches, public schools, private schools, private businesses ... social gatherings, marriages, residences..." Initially segregationist forces had not relied on such appeals, preferring instead to emphasize individual and property rights. But fearing a loss at the polls, they ultimately decided to directly invoke long-standing feelings of racial prejudice. State Senator Frederick Malkus intensified the racial polarization of the community by participating with Alabama Governor George Wallace in a debate on civil rights at Goucher College in Towson, Maryland. Malkus and Wallace, the national symbol of white supremacy, denounced pending federal civil rights legislation as un-American. Throwing fuel on the fire, Malkus blamed Gloria Richardson and outsiders for the troubles in Cambridge and claimed that communists and sex perverts had led the March on Washington.³¹

Throughout the campaign, local white elites had figured that they needed to win only one-third of the white vote to uphold the charter amendment. But this estimate rested on the assumption that Richardson and CNAC would rally blacks behind the measure. Much to their surprise, Richardson and CNAC publicly announced their opposition to the charter amendment and called upon blacks to boycott the election. This position rested upon Richardson's and CNAC's argument that the process whereby blacks were gaining their rights was illegitimate. "Constitutional rights cannot be given or taken away at the polls. A first-class citizen does not beg for freedom. A first-class citizen does not plead to the white power structure to give him something that the whites have no power to give or take away. These rights are human rights, not white rights."³²

On October 2nd, Cambridge's voters repealed the charter amendment; 1994 men and women (53.6%) voted for the referendum, 1720 voted against it. The referendum passed in every white ward of the city, winning over 80% of the votes in the white blue collar fourth ward. 85% of registered whites voted, the highest turnout in Cambridge's history. Nearly 95% of the voters of the black second ward opposed the referendum. Yet just short of 50% of the registered black voters went to the polls.³³

Local elites laid the blame for the amendment's demise solely on Richardson. So too did nearly all national moderate and liberal spokespersons. Both did so despite the fact that a large majority of whites voted against making discrimination in public accommodations illegal. For instance, following the election *Time* called Richardson a "zealot." Writing for the *Saturday Evening Post*, Robert Liston proclaimed that she merely sought to further her "power and fame." Murray Kempton made the same point in the *New Republic*. And Anthony Lewis, in one of the first and otherwise very favorable histories of the civil rights movement, censured Richardson for betraying the principles of nonviolence.

Lewis even contended that since the Supreme Court had not yet established that individuals had a legal right to demand service at a restaurant, Richardson did not have a philosophical leg to stand on. Of course, by the same reasoning Rosa Parks should have given up her seat on that historic day in Montgomery, Alabama.³⁴

Almost none of the mainstream press nor local elites in Cambridge lent any credence to Richardson's and CNAC's claim that the right to be served at a restaurant or hotel was something that blacks were entitled to as human beings, not something that should be left to the whim of the white majority. Nor did the mainstream press publicize CNAC's assertion that the accommodation bill did not even address the main problem, "chronic and widespread unemployment [and] inadequate housing." In the summer prior to the vote, CNAC volunteers had conducted a detailed door-to-door study on the concerns of Cambridge's black residents. The study revealed that only 6% of them considered equal access to public accommodations their top priority, while 42% named unemployment and 26% listed housing as their top concern.³⁵

By portraying the movement as an outgrowth of the *Brown* decision and the Montgomery bus boycotts, by focussing on Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaigns to win national civil rights legislation, contemporary liberals and many historians have presumed that legal equality, no matter the costs, was the primary objective of the civil rights movement. But as Richardson and CNAC demonstrated this was not the case. If equality before the law and desegregation had been the primary objectives, than it would have been accurate to call Richardson a zealot. But since equality in the fullest sense of the term, as an inalienable right, as a economic and social concern, as well as a legal one, was the goal, she was not.

Perhaps Richardson herself misled local whites into believing that she would support the amendment. More likely, whites misled themselves into believing that integration was the primary goal of the movement. Put another way, white moderates overestimated the weight of Martin Luther King's vision of a color blind society as presented in his speech at the March on Washington, and underestimated the significance and appeal of Malcolm X's black nationalist viewpoint. Richardson herself went to hear Malcolm X speak in Detroit in November 1963. Her initial reaction to hearing him was "wow!—you know this could be a really great man." Subsequently Richardson carried on a very friendly correspondence with Malcolm X. Together they considered forging a militant secular movement. An idea that Malcolm's assassination cut short.³⁶

Put another way, the fact that a large percentage of Cambridge's black chose to follow Richardson's lead suggested that they had reached a new stage in their struggle for equality. Richardson's decision to break with the white elite represented a rejection of the politics of accommodation and signaled that a large segment of Cambridge's black population was ready to challenge corporate paternalism. For most of the twentieth century, Richardson's grandfather, H. Maydanair St. Clair, had represented the black community in the town coun-

cil. Throughout his tenure he sided with white elites. St. Clair adopted this accommodationist stance not for reasons of self-enrichment nor personal power, but rather because he believed it represented the most pragmatic means for achieving racial equality. Local white elites rewarded blacks with jobs in the packing plants and moderate racial restrictions in the community. Given the power of local corporations and the historical animosity of poor whites to blacks in the region, St. Clair probably chose the right course. But by 1963, Richardson and CNAC were calling for a new strategy, one based on an assertion of the black community's independence and fundamental equality rather than one predicated on dependence and the beneficence of enlightened white leaders.

The vote over the public accommodations measure also marked a turning point in the history of whites in Cambridge. Thenceforth, "moderate" whites—primarily of the upper and middle class—moved to the right, aligning themselves with poorer and working class whites. Class divisions, which had been historically strong in Cambridge, diminished as blacks militantly challenged the racial status quo. Evidence of this shift came first in the spring of 1964 when Alabama Governor George Wallace delivered a fiery campaign speech at the Rescue and Fire Company's auditorium. Before a full capacity crowd of upwards of 1,200 whites, Wallace declared that the American way of life was at stake, that citizens had to protect their individual rights from the encroachment of the federal government. Cambridge's whites wildly applauded his speech.³⁷

Shortly after Wallace left Cambridge, between 400 and 500 blacks clashed with an equally large force of National Guardsmen. For nearly a year, CNAC had gotten along well with the Guard under the lead of General Gelston. But at this moment Governor Tawes' nephew, not Gelston, commanded the troops. Tawes ordered the protestors to disperse. When they refused to do so, the Guard arrested Richardson and began to spray the demonstrators with tear gas. That same night a two year old black boy, who lived in a nearby home which had felt the effects of the tear gas, died. Even though a county coroner later listed congenital heart failure as the cause of death, many in Cambridge insisted that blacks were now being gassed to death. In contrast, many whites felt that the Guard had been too soft on the demonstrators all along.³⁸

Several days later Wallace won 44.5% of the statewide vote in the Democratic presidential primary. He won sixteen of Maryland's twenty-three counties, including all of those on the Eastern shore; he defeated Brewster (Johnson's stand-in) by a margin of four to one in Dorchester County, despite the fact that 95% of all blacks voted against him. About a month after the presidential primary, Cambridge's voters overwhelmingly elected a segregationist slate. Osvrey Pritchett, a former officer with the Resuce and Fire Company, soundly defeated Charles Walls, a former official with the Phillips Packing company and a moderate on civil rights. Four years earlier Pritchett had lost to Mowbray by nearly a two-to-one margin. This time 78% of Cambridge's voters voted

for Pritchett. This made meaningless the nearly unanimous support that Walls received from blacks.³⁹

In other words, two and one-half years after the first freedom rides, Cambridge's white voters had spoken. They had elected a man identified with the segregationist cause whose main campaign promise was the restoration of "law and order." Protests in the streets, death, the presence of the national guard had not convinced the community to enact reforms. On the contrary, they united whites who had historically been divided along class lines. Once priding themselves in their reputation as a community of racial progress, Cambridge's whites and blacks moved to the right and left, respectively. The Vital Center, which Arthur Schlesinger had described as the centerpiece of liberalism, disintegrated. In these regards Cambridge was only an omen of things to come elsewhere across the nation.

A FALSE PEACE

Several years of peace followed the 1964 mayoral election. When the National Guard left the city in July 1964, new riots did not erupt. When blacks "tested" restaurants following the passage of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, whites, in general, did not resist. Not surprisingly, many whites credited Mayor Pritchett's "law and order" policies with ending the turmoil. At the same time, the restoration of peace allowed whites to reassert their traditional claim that Cambridge had a good racial record and that outside agitators and irresponsible leaders, namely Gloria Richardson, had caused the trouble in the first place. The fact that the end of the protests in Cambridge coincided with Richardson's departure from town served as virtually irrefutable evidence of this viewpoint. (In the fall of 1964 Richardson remarried and moved to New York City with her new husband, Frank Dandridge, a reporter with the *New York Times*.)⁴⁰

The fact that Cambridge did make some progress during these years added some weight to this interpretation of events. Local politicians applied for and received Great Society/War on Poverty funds to alleviate some of the economic problems that underlay some of the troubles of the early 1960s. When the Fire Company closed down its pool rather than comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the local government obtained a federal grant which allowed the city to open the facility and operate it on a nonsegregated basis. A large public housing unit was constructed in the Second Ward and local elites continued to pursue new business. Moreover, the unemployment rate fell and promised to keep falling.⁴¹

Yet before Cambridge's whites could settle back into a routine of touting their town as an example of racial progress, another riot erupted. This one followed a fiery speech delivered by SNCC's new chairman H. Rap Brown, in which the black power spokesperson called for blacks to "get their guns" and added: "I don't care if we have to burn him down or run him out, you gotta take ... your freedom." Shortly after his speech a policeman was shot by a black resident. A couple hours later fires burst out at an old black elementary school, a symbol of inequality,

and spread to adjacent buildings. When the fire company refused to enter the area, complaining that it feared for its lives, and refused to lend its equipment to local blacks who sought to douse the blaze, the fire spread, ultimately consuming over two blocks of the second ward.⁴²

Not surprisingly, local whites uniformly blamed the riots on outside agitators and local zealots who had invited them to town. Governor Spiro Agnew, who up until the riots had earned a reputation as a moderate Republican who enjoyed the support of civil rights forces, singled out Brown as the cause of the riots in a fiery address of his own. Cambridge's local Police Chief Brice Kinnamon concurred in biting testimony before a Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on an anti-riot measure, often referred to as the Brown amendment. A grand jury indicted Brown on charges of inciting a riot, begetting one of the strangest and longest legal struggles in recent history, one which I do not have time to describe at this point in time, suffice to say that Brown was never convicted on these charges but was sentenced to a lengthy prison term stemming from his participation in an armed robbery while fleeing attempts to convict him on the riot charges.⁴³

FINAL ANALYSIS: THE LONG VIEW

Few challenged this explanation of the 1967 riots. And no public analysts took the long view which sought to root the 1967 riots in the turbulence of the decade nor in the long-term history of the community. (The one exception being a draft report on the disturbance written by a staff member of the Kerner Commission. But his document did not become part of the commission's report.) Indeed, over twenty-five years later it is tempting to find value in the view that emphasizes the role that individuals played in Cambridge's history and the turmoil of the Sixties in general. And much of what I have already presented suggests that Cambridge's white leaders deserve a large degree of the blame for the city's racial turmoil. While they feigned a concern over racial inequality, by in large they failed to provide strong leadership, which in turn encouraged poor whites to defend segregation. In contrast, in Salisbury and Princess Anne, where local elites had proposed new reforms in reaction to the first appearances of the freedom riders, riots did not erupt. Put another way, if local elites had acceded to CNAC's demands to desegregate facilities and supported efforts to improve housing and foster employment, before the spring of 1963, there is a good chance that the riots might have been averted.

Yet, blaming local white elites does not go far enough in explaining the course of events. As tempting as it is to emphasize the role that prominent individuals played, ultimately it fails to explain why Cambridge's elite chose a different course than their fellows elsewhere, why Cambridge gave rise to Richardson, while other Eastern Shore communities did not produce a similar leader, and why Brown's fiery rhetoric had such an incendiary affect in this community but not in others where he used just as inflammatory language. It also ignores the role that larger structural forces played in Cambridge's history. In

other words, we should not forget the insightful maxim that people are made by history as much as history is made by people. To overemphasize the actions that individuals in Cambridge took also runs the risk of reinforcing the view that Cambridge exploded because its citizens were more bigoted or zealous than citizens in communities which did not explode, when, in fact, there is little evidence that this was the case.⁴⁴

To fully understand the history of the civil rights movement in Cambridge, we need to examine its particular social, economic, political and historical circumstances which automatically turns our attention to the Phillips Packing Company. The Phillips Packing Company was formed in 1907 by three Cambridge natives, Albanus Phillips, Levi Phillips, and W. G. Winterbottom. The company grew steadily until the late 1940s. It even sustained good profits during the depression. At its peak, from 1944 to 1947, the company operated over twenty plants and employed over 4,000 workers, about half of them in Cambridge, the rest on other locations on the Delmarva peninsula. This meant that everyone in Cambridge either worked for Phillips or knew someone who did. (Cambridge's population fluctuated between 10,000 and 13,000 during most of the twentieth century.) Phillips produced over fifty varieties of canned foods, primarily vegetables, including 1/8th of all of the canned tomatoes in America. As the leading supplier of C-rations in the nation, Phillips sales skyrocketed during World War II, from 8.5 million dollars in 1940 to over 27 million dollars in 1945. It sustained high sales and profits in the immediate aftermath of the war.⁴⁵

From 1947 to 1957, however, Phillips fortune went into decline. No one factor caused this to occur. Phillips reputation as a fierce opponent to unions, which resulted in an AFL sponsored boycott of its products, diminished sales. But larger changes in the food processing industry, from the introduction of frozen foods to mergers and market consolidations, played an even more important role. From 1947 to 1963 the number of plants processing canned fruits and vegetables, nationwide, fell 25 per cent. The stronger often more diversified firms survived this restructuring. Others, such as Phillips, which saw its earnings plummet from a high of \$3.64 a share in 1947 to a low of \$.02 a share in 1956, did not. In 1957 Consolidated Foods, a diversified food processing, wholesale and retail establishment, headquartered in Chicago, acquired control of Phillips. Coastal Foods, one of Consolidated subsidiaries, operated some of Phillips old plants after the merger. By 1962, however, the company was only a shell of its old self, employing 200-400 men and women, about one-tenth of the number that had worked in Phillips' plants fifteen years earlier.⁴⁶

The Phillips company's political influence tended to parallel its economic fortunes. At its peak the company dominated Cambridge's political life. Augustus and Levi Phillips were power brokers in the Maryland Republican party, statewide and locally. They controlled the black vote in Cambridge (blacks generally voted for the party of Lincoln until the 1960s), including the selection of the token black city councilman. The Phillips' business partner, William Winterbottom, enjoyed just as impor-

tant status within the Democratic party. Indeed his name became synonymous with one of the two main political factions in the region, the other faction being the Harrington faction, named after Emerson Harrington a native of Cambridge and a governor of Maryland during the progressive era. Through World War II the Winterbottom faction won nearly every city and county election. It controlled the Mayor's office, the town council, judgeships and the county commissioners.⁴⁷

One example of the company's power came during a strike in the summer of 1937. On June 22 between 1,500 and 2,000 employees of the Phillips Packing Company spontaneously walked off their jobs. Within a short period of time they shut down operations at six separate plants, routed the police and issued a set of demands which included a 40 cent an hour minimum wage, an eight hour day and the right to organize a union. (They sought to affiliate with the Tin Can Makers, and the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America.) A variety of state and national labor activists rushed to Cambridge to help them win their demands. Anna Neary of the Maryland state labor federation, for one, pledged the workers her undivided support. Union leaders nationwide seconded Neary's statement.⁴⁸

Uprisings of this sort were occurring all across the nation giving rise to the C.I.O. In Cambridge, however, Phillips easily turned back the labor movement's challenge to its power. Within two weeks of the walkout, national guard units arrived in Cambridge to protect trucking convoys that had continued to ship Phillips' products. In the same time period local authorities arrested several leaders of the walkout, convicting them on a variety of trumped up charges, from drunkenness to disorderly conduct. Under the advice of a top Baltimore law firm and local counsel Judge Laird Henry, Jr., Phillips devised a sophisticated legal and public relations campaign to marginalize the strike leaders and punish those who supported the union. Faced with repression in the streets, strike leaders called off the walkout. At the same time, AFL and CIO affiliates filed complaints with the National Labor Relations Board charging Phillips with unfair labor practices. In February 1938 the NLRB ruled in favor of the unions, ordering Phillips to reinstate several of the strike leaders and to disband the CWA. Later that summer, the Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the NLRB's ruling. Yet by then, Phillips had snuffed out the insurgency.⁴⁹ After World War II, The Food and Tobacco Workers made another attempt to organize a union at Phillips. It too was easily defeated.⁵⁰ Indeed, the ease with which Phillips crushed the union in 1937 and subsequent organizing drives not only displayed the company's power it also reflected the relative social stability in of Cambridge. While the strike was a startling event, it passed quickly, almost like a fluke summer hailstorm. Not surprisingly, it quickly faded from public memory and has not received any mention in local histories.

Declining profits and sales, and a smaller work force, however, resulted in a decrease in Phillips' economic and political power. In 1950, Frederick Malkus, a native of Cambridge, graduate of the University of Maryland law

school, and a World War II veteran, mounted a successful challenge to Winterbottom's control of the Democratic party, winning a seat in the State Senate (a post he held for forty-four years). In his own words, he "beat" Phillips by building a coalition of rural farmers, muskrat hunters and watermen. While Malkus' victory did not signal the end of the Phillips Company's political power, it suggested that municipal politics had entered a period of transition or flux, a condition that historian J. Mills Thornton has termed critical to the emergence of the civil rights movement in various communities throughout the South.

This said, neither blacks nor whites celebrated Phillips' decline and eventual sale. Blacks were particularly hard hit by the company's troubles since it had been their main source of employment, especially during the peak canning seasons, as evidenced by the exceptionally high unemployment rates that beset the community as the 1960s dawned.⁵¹ In addition the earnings of those who were employed stagnated producing particularly hard times for small businesses, including segregated restaurants. During the freedom rides white restaurant owners often complained that they could not integrate for economic not ideological reasons. Given the precariousness business conditions they faced, they argued, they could not afford to lose even a margin of their customers, at least some of whom would refuse to frequent their establishments if they were desegregated. Or as some restaurant owners put it, personally they had no problem with serving black customers but since many of their white customers came from the rural countryside where racism ran deep they could not afford to do so.

Economic tensions had their parallels in the political realm. Much of the antagonism among whites during the 1960s grew out of the historical rivalry between the Winterbottom and Harrington factions, in other words between poor and elite whites. During the fight over the public accommodations charter individuals traditionally associated with the Winterbottom faction, namely local elites, found themselves pitted against representatives of the Harrington faction who did not forget about the Phillips' company's historical domination of Cambridge's political life. The latter used the battle over public accommodations as a means to assert themselves. In fact they seemed to relish their newfound ability to snub their noses at the representatives of the former Phillips regime.

At the same time, the Phillips company's decline created among blacks a sense that the political situation was ripe for a challenge to the racial status quo and may have unleashed latent rivalries within the black community. Such rivalries had begun to emerge even before the freedom riders arrived but they exploded into the open during the early 1960s with Richardson's and CNAC's condemnation of the accommodationist approach of several top black officials, including Charles Cornish the town's black councilman. Ironically, Richardson, who stood at the forefront of the black community's challenge, with her militant assertion of independence, was the granddaughter of the black politician who had established and practiced an accommodationist approach for nearly one-half a century. Local blacks, however, did not

associate Richardson with this position because she did not hold any public office at the time that the movement erupted. This development was even further steeped in irony by the fact that she probably did not hold a position of power because she was a woman. If she had been a man, most likely she would have been the town's black representative and thus would have been viewed as an accommodationist.⁵²

In sum, the instability of Cambridge's political-economy explains why it became the locale of a vibrant civil rights movement while other communities with just as poor or even worse racial reputations and records did not. Structural factors poised Cambridge for disruption. If the Phillips Company had still dominated Cambridge's life, it is unlikely that the community would have erupted or that the turmoil would have lasted so long. Phillips could have punished blacks who tried to protest against the racial status quo; white segregationist would not have been able to assert themselves as easily and the political atmosphere would have been less volatile. Moreover, the economic destabilization of the region added to the black community's sense of inequality. Yet, in spite of their poverty, by the early 1960s Cambridge's blacks had accumulated enough resources to mount a challenge, whereas in other communities, perhaps in an equal states of change, blacks lacked the power to mount and sustain a movement.

How does all of this relate to our understanding of the 1960s in general? Most basically it reminds us of the necessity of tying our studies of the decade into a sophisticated analysis of the political, economic and historical context of the era, something conservative critics are loathe to do, with their romantic view of the 1950s. It also reminds us that the Sixties should not be viewed monolithically and/or polemically, as all good or all bad. The black freedom struggle in Cambridge was "exhaustively crooked and extensively smudged." Cambridge's blacks did not achieve the sort of great victories that are often accorded to the civil rights movement of the first half of the 1960s. Several years of hard struggle failed to move local whites and in turn paved the way for another explosion in the latter 1960s. This said, the struggles were not for naught. Cambridge's blacks were not simply repressed. On the tangible level, the protests prodded the federal government to provide funding for public housing and jobs and they prepared the way for compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The civil rights movement also led to a successful organizing drive by the United Packinghouse Workers, overcoming thirty years of resistance to unionization by the Phillips Company in the process. And most importantly, they prodded blacks to arrive at new sense of their selves.

Prior to the 1960s, as Howard Schneider a white native of the region has written, blacks in Cambridge were invisible. It was easy for middle class whites to claim that Cambridge had a good reputation in terms of race relations because they had little if any genuine communication with the black community. After the early 1960s, however, it became much more difficult for them to maintain this view, because blacks threw off the cloak of invisibility. Even if they did not gain many of their

concrete demands, henceforth they would be a much more visible force in Cambridge's life and would continue to struggle for full equality.⁵³ Most likely, the same can be said for other Americans, from women and gays, who until the 1960s rarely spoke out and were repressed or often ignored when they did.

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NOTES

¹ A good example of the conservative critique of the 1960s is: Peter Collier and David Horowitz, *Second Thoughts: Former Radicals Look Back at the Sixties* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1989). Good review essays on the sixties are: Wini Breines, "Whose New Left?" *Journal of American History* 75 (September 1988), p. 545; Alan Brinkly, "Dreams of the Sixties," *New York Review of Books* 34:10 (1987); and Maurice Isserman, "The Not-So-Dark and Bloody Ground: New Works on the 1960s," *American Historical Review* 94:4 (October 1969), p. 990.

² For an example of the traditional coverage of the civil rights movement see, Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (New York: Viking, 1987). Good review essays on the literature on the movement are: Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," *American Historical Review* 96:2 (1991), p. 456 and Adam Fairclough, "State of the Art: Historians and the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American Studies* 24. Clayborne Carson, "The Black Freedom Struggle," in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, ed. Charles Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Virginia, 1986) and Armstead L. Robinson and Patricia Sullivan, eds., *New Directions in Civil Rights Studies* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), "Introduction."

³ Robert J. Norrell, "One Thing We Did Right: Reflections on the Movement," and J. Mills Thornton III, "Municipal Politics and the Course of the Movement" both in *New Directions in Civil Rights Studies*, ed. Robinson and Sullivan.

⁴ Discussions of the role that women played in the civil rights movement can be found in Vicki Crawford, et. al., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1990). Unlike a number of other key female civil rights activists such as Ella Baker and Jo Ann Robinson, Richardson did not play a behind-the-scenes role. Nor is it accurate to characterize her as a quiet dignified force, like Rosa Parks or Daisy Bates. Rather, Gloria Richardson's militancy led journalists to compare her to Joan of Arc. And while this comparison might be unfair (to Richardson) it does compel us to broaden our picture of what the civil rights movement looked like.

⁵ *New York Times*, 11 September 1960, sec. xx, p. 13; *Baltimore American*, 2 March 1947, p. 3.

⁶ *Time*, 19 July 1963, pp. 17-18; *National Review*, 23 August 1967, p. 47; *Ebony*, July 1964, pp. 23-30.

⁷ An indispensable document on this period is George R. Kent, "The Negro in Politics in Dorchester County, Maryland," M.A. Thesis, University of Maryland, 1961. Kent taught at the all-black high school in Cambridge while researching and writing this thesis. Also see the Cambridge *Daily Banner* for the months July through December, especially a year-end special, 31 December 1960 and Cambridge Non-Violent Action Committee, "The Negro Ward of Cambridge, Maryland: A Study in Change," September 1963 [henceforth: CNAC, "Study"], Cambridge Non-Violent Action Committee Papers [henceforth CNAC Papers], State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. One of the main issues of the campaign was whether to repeal an old Sabbath law so that the theater could be operated on Sundays, segregation intact.

⁸ *Moody's Manual of Investment American and Foreign* (London: Moody's, 1940, 1953 and 1957); Cambridge and Dorchester County Industrial and Business Development and Maryland State Planning Commission, "A Program for Economic Development of Dorchester County," (1950); Hobart Taylor, Jr. to John E. Nolan, Jr., 19 July 1963 [Regarding Employment in Cambridge area], in Civil Rights During the Kennedy Era, 1961-1963, University Publications of America, Part 2, reel 26; Phillips Packing Company, Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

⁹ Cambridge *Daily Banner*, 14 July and 31 December 1960; CNAC, "Study," CNAC Papers; John Wennersten, *Maryland's Eastern Shore*, ch. 8; Interview with Frederick Malkus, Annapolis, Maryland, 2 February 1993.

¹⁰ Cambridge *Daily Banner*, 30 December 1961, p. 10.

¹¹ George Calcott, *Maryland and America*, pp. 155-156; *New York Times*, 12 July 1961, p. 13; 4 September 1961, p. 1; 16 September 1961, p. 2; 21 September 1961, p. 20; 27 September 1961, p. 2; 5 October 1961, p. 24; 8 October 1961, p. 56; 28 October 1961, p. 24; 29 October 1961, p. 52 and 2 November 1961, p. 28. To an extent, Cambridge became a target of these rides through an accident of history. In the summer and fall of 1961, civil rights activists had organized sit-ins along Route 40 which ran north of Baltimore and toward Philadelphia. The refusal of several restaurants along the highway to serve African diplomats precipitated these protests and deeply embarrassed the Kennedy Administration, which was trying hard to establish good relations with a number of newly independent and unaligned African nations. The Kennedy Administration responded by pressuring restaurants along Route 40 to serve blacks. Maryland's Governor J. Millard Tawes augmented this action by agreeing to sponsor civil rights legislation. As a result civil rights forces agreed to call off the Route 40 freedom rides but not to disband their forces. Instead they trained their sights on nearby facilities along Route 50, which ran from Annapolis, Maryland's state capital, across the Chesapeake Bay Bridge and then down Maryland's Eastern Shore. Crisfield, the home town of Maryland's Governor Tawes, and Salisbury, the locale of an infamous lynching in the 1930s, became two of the first communities that the riders tested. When these protests took place without significant incident—Salisbury, for instance, agreed to appoint a bi-racial human relations commission—the riders turned their attention to Cambridge, which had the largest black community in the region.

¹² "Cambridge Report," 1962, CORE Papers (microfilm edition), Reel 40.

¹³ *Afro-American* 27 January 1962; CNAC, "Survey," CNAC Papers.

¹⁴ *Afro-American*, 27, January 1962; "Cambridge Report," 1962, CORE Papers, Reel 40.

¹⁵ *Afro-American*, 27 January 1962, p. 7 and 10 February 1962, p. 4.; CNAC, "Study," CNAC Papers; "Cambridge Report," *ibid*.

¹⁶ Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Free Pr., 1984) and Douglass McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of the Black Insurgency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) provide the theoretical framework for understanding the ways in which the civil rights movement of the 1960s built on the institutional and personal steps which African Americans had already made. By in large the history of African Americans in Cambridge is difficult to reconstruct. One of the few sources on their past is: Kay McElvey, "Early Black Dorchester 1776-1870: A History of the Struggle of African Americans in Dorchester County, Maryland, to be free to make their own choices," Ed.D. Dissertation, University of Maryland, 1990.

¹⁷ Melanie B. Cook, "Gloria Richardson," *Sage* [Student Supplement], (1988); Annette K. Brock, "Gloria Richardson and the Cambridge Movement," in *Women in the Civil Rights Movement*, Telephone interview with Gloria Richardson; Howard Schneider, "Summer of Fire," *Washington Post Magazine*, 26 July 1992, p. 18 and 25. Richardson related that her father had received inadequate medical care because the local hospital catered to whites only. She also noted that her grandfather, even though a town councilman, was not allowed to dine with his fellow officials at various honorary events.

¹⁸ "Gloria Richardson," *Ebony*, July 1964, pp. 23-30; Murray Kempton, "Gloria, Gloria," *New Republic* 11 November 1963, pp. 15-17; Robert Liston, "Who Can We Surrender To?" *Saturday Evening Post*, 5 October 1963, pp. 78-80; Melanie B. Cook, "Gloria Richardson, SAGE [Student Supplement], (1988); CNAC, "Study," CNAC Papers.

¹⁹ *Afro-American*, 15 June 1962, p. 4 and 20 April 1963; *Daily Banner*, 4 September 1962; "Editorial: WJZ-TV by Herbert Cahan," 24 July 1963, Governor Tawes Papers, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis [henceforth MSA], S1041-1530. Telephone interview with Gloria Richardson. Howard Schneider, "Summer of Fire," p. 10. On the history of school desegregation in Cambridge see: United States Commission on Civil Rights, "School Desegregation in Dorchester County, Maryland," September 1977 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Civil Rights Commission, 1977).

²⁰ CNAC, "Study," CNAC Papers; Hobart Taylor, Jr. to John E. Nolan, Jr., 19 July 1963, and Memo to Attorney General [Regarding Employment in Cambridge], 18 July 1963, both in Civil Rights During the Kennedy Years, Reel 26.

²¹ *Afro-American*, 15 June 1963, p. 24; CNAC, "Study," CNAC Papers.

²² *Daily Banner*, 24 January and 1 and 2 February 1962.

²³ "Analysis of the Cambridge, Maryland Disturbances," Office of the Assistant Director of Research, Staff Report No. 4 (Draft), Civil Rights During the Johnson Administration," 1963-1969, University Publications of America, Part I, Reel 6.

²⁴ CNAC, "Study," CNAC Papers.

²⁵ *Baltimore Sun*, 8 May 1963. *Cambridge Daily Banner*, 8 May 1963, p. 1; Annette Brock, "Gloria Richardson and the Cambridge Movement," p. 128.

²⁶ MICRPR, "Report on Racial Situation in Cambridge," Governor Tawes Papers, MSA; "Cambridge Report," 1963,

CORE Papers, Reel 21; *NY Times*, 5-11 June 1963; *Afro-American*, 18 May 18 8 June 1963.

²⁷ White's "Letter" quoted in Howard Schneider, "Summer of Fire," p. 8.

²⁸ "Cambridge Report," 1963, CORE Papers, Reel 21; *NY Times*, 5-11 June 1963; *Afro-American*, 18 May and 8 June 1963; Burke Marshall, "Memorandum," June 17, 1963, Burke Marshall Papers, in Civil Rights During the Kennedy Years, 1961-63, Reel 26.

²⁹ *NY Times*, 11-15 June 1963; *Daily Banner*, 11-15 June 1963; *Afro-American*, 15 June 1963; Governor Tawes, "Press Release," 14 June 1963, Governor Tawes Papers, MSA, S1041-1530.

³⁰ "Cambridge Report," 1963, CORE Papers, Reel 21; Burke Marshall, "Memorandum," 1963, Burke Marshall Papers.

³¹ *NY Times*, 9 July 1963; *Daily Banner*, 7-12 July 1963; Dwight Campbell, "Report," 11 July 1963, CORE Papers, Reel 21.

³² *NY Times*, 13 July 1963; Dwight Campbell, "Report," *ibid*; *Afro-American*, 13 July 1963, p. 1; Governor J. Millard Tawes, "Speech," 19 July 1963, Governor Tawes Papers, MSA, S1041-1557.

³³ *Afro-American*, 20 July 1963; "Agreement," 22 July 1963, Civil Rights During the Kennedy Administration, 1961-1963, Part 2, Reel 26.

³⁴ *NY Times*, 24 July 1963, p. 1; *Daily Banner*, 2, 4, 9 and 10 August 1963.

³⁵ *Daily Banner*, 23 August 1963, 25 and 28 September 1963.

³⁶ *Daily Banner*, 10, 14 and 30 September 1963.

³⁷ *Afro-American*, 28 September 1963; "Field Report," 1963, SNCC Papers [microfilm edition], University Publications of America, Reel 17; CNAC, "Statement," and Gloria Richardson, "Press Release," both in Burke Marshall Papers, Reel 26; CNAC, "Study," CNAC Papers.

³⁸ *Afro-American*, 5 October 1963.

³⁹ *Time*, 11 October 1963, p. 30; *Saturday Evening Post*, 5 October 1963, pp. 78-80; *New Republic*, 11 November 1963; Anthony Lewis, *Portrait of a Decade*, pp. 100-103.

⁴⁰ CNAC, "Study," CNAC Papers.

⁴¹ Peter Goldman, *The Death and Life of Malcolm X*, second edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 116-118, 141-142 and 152-153. The FBI expressed concern over Richardson's presence at several of Malcolm's meetings. See: *Malcolm X: FBI Surveillance File* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1978) [microfilm].

⁴² William Grove Jones, *The Wallace Story*, pp. 276-280; *Daily Banner*, 12 May 1964.

⁴³ Cleveland Sellers, *The River of No Return*, p. 71; *NY Times*, 13 May 1963, p. 21 and 15 May 1963, p. 21.

⁴⁴ *Daily Banner*, 13 and 14 July 1964.

⁴⁵ Even thirty years later State Senator Frederick Malkus insists that Cambridge has unreservedly received a bad reputation. He cites the usual litany of examples of racial progress before the freedom riders arrived to support this view. Interview with Frederick Malkus.

⁴⁶ Information on this period comes from multiple sources, including interview with Steve Fraser, April 1994; Papers of Governor Tawes and Governor Spiro Agnew, at the Maryland State Archives; Reports of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity and the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and from the *Cambridge Daily Banner*.

⁴⁷ See "Analysis of Cambridge Maryland Disturbance," in *Civil Rights During the Johnson Administration, 1963-1964: Part 5: Records of the Advisory Committee on Civil Disorders*

(Fredricksburg: University Publications of America, 1984); Also see the printed collection on the riots in Cambridge put together by the staff of the Maryland State Archive, entitled: *Is Baltimore Burning? Maryland State Archives: Documents for the Classroom* (Annapolis: Maryland State Archives, n.d.).

⁴⁸ Jules Witcover, *White Knight: The Rise of Spiro Agnew* (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 159-163; *Is Baltimore Burning?* U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 90th Congress, 1st Session, "Hearings on H.R. 421, Anti-riot Bill—1967," (Washington: GPO, 1967), pp. 31-60.

⁴⁹ In the early 1960s several magazines compared Cambridge to Salisbury, Maryland. The latter did not experience racial turmoil, these magazines argued, because of the enlightened leadership of the community, both black and white. Historians of the Eastern Shore of Maryland have repeated this analysis without any qualifications.

⁵⁰ *Moody's Manual of Investment American and Foreign* (1940, 1945 and 1953); Charles B. Clark, *The Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia* (New York: Lewis Historical, 1950), Vol I, pp. 857-876; Vol II, pp. 7-9; "Phillips Packing Company," Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland; Phillips Packing Company, "Annual Report," 1939-1956; Maryland Historical Society, *Maryland in World War II: Vol. II: Industry and Agriculture* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1951), p. 44.

⁵¹ *Moody's* (1957); Hobart Taylor Jr. to John E. Nolan, [Re: Employment in Cambridge], 19 July 1963, Burke Marshall Papers, Reel 26; John M. Connor, *Food Processing: An Industrial Powerhouse in Transition* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1988), p. 374.

⁵² Charles B. Clark, *The Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia*, (New York: Lewis Historical, 1950), Vol. III, pp. 7-9; George B. Kent, "The Negro in Politics in Dorchester County, Maryland."

⁵³ Phillips Packing Company, Inc., Maryland Vertical File, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland.

⁵⁴ Phillips Packing Company, Maryland Vertical File; Interview with Frederick Malkus; United Cannery, Agricultural and Allied Workers of America, "Official Proceedings, First National Convention, Denver, Colorado, July 9-17, 1937;" Anon., "The Eastern-Shore—A Challenge to Maryland," n.d. [at U.S. Department of Labor Library]. Also see: Phillips Packing Company, "Case File," National Labor Relations Board, RG25, entry 155, Box 1608, National Archives, Suitland, Maryland.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Interview with Frederick Malkus; J. Mills Thornton III, "Municipal Politics and the Course of the Civil Rights Movement," in *New Directions in Civil Rights Studies*, Armstead Robinson and Patricia Sullivan eds. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991).

⁵⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Census of U.S. Population*, Vol. II, 1950 and 1960; Memo to Attorney General [Regarding Employment in Cambridge], 18 June 1963, Burke Marshall Papers, Reel 26.

⁵⁸ *Daily Banner*, 14 June 1963, p. 1; Stewart Alsop, *Saturday Evening Post*, 6 June 1964, p. 12.

⁵⁹ George Kent, "The Negro in Politics in Dorchester County, Maryland," ch. 4.

⁶⁰ Howard Schneider, "Summer of Fire."

TAKES ON NATURE: THREE U.S. PERSPECTIVES FROM THE VIET NAM WAR

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"Rain! rain! Do go on raining for my sake! Many more enemies will surrender," writes a Viet Minh diarist in Nam Cao's "In the Jungle" (178). His assumption—that the Vietnamese climate will help him drive the French from his land—reinforces a theme of alliance with nature that runs throughout Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American literature of the wars with the French and the Americans, and on into the literature of post-liberation Viet Nam. "I looked at nature as a way out of the craziness of the labor camp," says Jade Ngoc Quang Huynh, author of *South Wind Changing*, a book chronicling a Mekong Delta childhood, imprisonment in a reeducation camp, escape to Thailand, and new beginnings in the United States. Throughout this odyssey, "nature kept me alive," Jade says (20).

If a paradigm of nature-as-ally is part of the vocabulary of Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American literature, a construct of nature-as-enemy is part of the lingua franca of U.S.-born writers of the Viet Nam war. For example, Captain Beaupre in David Halberstam's *One Very Hot Day* thinks, "The heat was the enemy of all white men," while Paul Berlin in *Going after Cacciato* learns that "the land is your true enemy." However, U.S. writers almost never present nature as an antagonist without also at least acknowledging a construct of nature as a friend. Such a duality is deep in the American tradition: If some settlers had seen the American wilderness as a "Devil's Den," a place of temptation and degeneration, others had seen it as a "Promised Land," a place of new beginnings and fulfillment. Nature contained both demonic and edenic possibilities. In the U.S. literature of the Viet Nam War, such opposites continue to be linked. A close look at a short story, a novel, and a memoir from the Viet Nam War shows the very different purposes to which U.S. writers put the construct of nature-as-enemy, as well as the variety of ways in which those writers link that construct to its opposite, whether to discredit the alternative, affirm the alternative, or describe the psychological progression from one alternative to the other. In addition, a consideration of these three works indicates the role that proximity to death can play in forcing a renegotiation of the relationship to both society and nature.

Tim O'Brien's "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong" is patterned after Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," where nature is a spiritual antagonist, embodying the worst in human beings. Conrad's African jungle calls forth the evil in the European heart, evoking the "brutal instincts" and "monstrous passions" that lie beneath the surface (216). Like the jungle itself, the denizens of the jungle become symbols of the wilderness in the European soul: Conrad's Africans, as Chinua Achebe points out, are not humans with histories and cultures of their own but

rather "natural" beings, examples of what Europeans were in prehistory or would be again if they slipped the bonds of civilization. Narrator Marlow explores the degeneration of one such European, Kurtz, whose morals dissipate as he heeds the "mute spell of the wilderness" (216). Conrad's nature is the obverse of culture: if culture imposes order, reason, and civility, then nature harbors disorder, irrationality, and violence. Conrad links what he portrays as "natural" in and "native" to Africa to what is "innate" in the European soul.

O'Brien's "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong" transposes "Heart of Darkness" from Africa to Viet Nam—except that O'Brien's Kurtz is an American woman. His Marlow is medic Rat Kiley, an uneducated young man with "a reputation for exaggeration and overstatement." Kiley's freedom with the truth allows O'Brien considerable poetic license, while Kiley's lack of sophistication permits O'Brien to portray nature and "natives" in Conrad's nineteenth-century terms, terms still popularized by Hollywood if discredited in educated circles.

The story is set in a mountain aid station inhabited by nine medics and six Green Berets, the "Greenies." The compound is surrounded by striking landscape:

To the north and west the country rose up in thick walls of wilderness, triple-canopied jungle, mountains unfolding into higher mountains, ravines and gorges and fast-moving rivers and waterfalls and exotic butterflies and steep cliffs and smoky little hamlets and great valleys of bamboo and elephant grass. (103).

As in "Heart of Darkness," this "wilderness" is a place where nature permits human nature to emerge. Like Conrad's Africans, the Green Berets "melt" into the jungle or "materialize" out of it. They "were not social animals," we are told. "Animals...but far from social" (103). To be "animal" in this setting is to be asocial, a conduit instead for the force of nature.

So when Mark Fossie, one of the medics, brings his blond and blue-eyed girl friend over from the States, and she is "intrigued" by "the land," it is an ominous sign. Mary Anne Bell, in her white culottes and pink sweater, learns everything she can about the war and the Vietnamese, and soon the medics are calling her "our own little native" (107). When she starts going out on patrol with the Green Berets and a worried Fossie decides to send her home, her apparent agreement to leave pulls her one way while "nature" pulls her another. "The wilderness seemed to draw her in," we are told. She is at a crossroads between her socialization and her inner nature: It was "as if she were caught in that no-man's-land between Cleveland Heights and deep jungle" (115)

Mary Anne opts for jungle. Instead of returning to the U.S., she disappears with the Green Berets for three weeks, and when she returns, "her eyes seemed to shine in the dark" and she is wearing over her pink sweater a necklace of human tongues. The Greenies' hooch, where Fossie tracks her, contains horrors to rival those of Kurtz's Inner Station—body parts and stacks of bones and a sign saying, "ASSEMBLE YOUR OWN GOOK!! FREE SAMPLE KIT!!" . In "Heart of Darkness," carnage is an expression of the "unspeakable rites" and "incon-

ceivable ceremonies" of those presumed to live close to nature (199-200). In "Sweetheart," the butchery is also portrayed as a tribal atrocity, a revelation of indigenous evil. The tribal, the natural, and the atrocious are all equated. Mary Anne is "half-singing, half-chanting," and the hooch is filled with "a weird deep-wilderness sound—tribal music—bamboo flutes and drums and chimes." The music, "which seemed to come from the earth itself, from the deep rain forest," is "chaotic...without rhythm or form or progression, like the noise of nature" (118, 121). Added to nature's noise is nature's smell—"thick and numbing, like an animal's den, a mix of blood and scorched hair and excrement and the sweet sour odor of moldering flesh—the stink of the kill" (119). Kiley says of Mary Anne: "The girl joined the zoo. One more animal—end of story" (117-118).

As Mary Anne becomes "animal," as she moves from culture to nature, she moves from order to chaos, from civil to "native," from restraint to a violence that has no purpose other than its own expression. There is no limit to this evil because, in this nineteenth-century construct, there is no order to nature: it is "chaotic...without rhythm or form or progression." This is not a view of nature in which every organism has its place in the web of life, and all are necessary to the whole; there is no rightness to *this* animal.

Though this construct presents a demonic view of nature, O'Brien acknowledges an edenic alternative—but only to dismiss it. O'Brien describes Mary Anne as someone "perfectly at peace with herself." He has her explain her transformation to an uncomprehending Fossie: "It's not *bad*. You know? I feel close to myself. When I'm out there at night, I feel close to my own body, I can feel my blood moving, my skin and my fingernails, everything, it's like I'm full of electricity and I'm glowing in the dark....but it doesn't matter because I know exactly who I am" (120-21). That she casts what she has done in terms of self-discovery and self-actualization—and that she sees it as "not bad"—becomes O'Brien's wry comment on New Age notions. He juxtaposes ideas of innate goodness to the realities of war, creating derisive irony. His story shows that there is a beast and not a child within. People who think otherwise, Kiley says, "Don't know human nature. [They] don't know 'Nam" (108).

Using a "girl" to show the "animal" inside all human beings allows O'Brien's Kiley to make the point that it is *human* nature and not testosterone or male roles or social conditioning that creates atrocities in war. He says that the gender differences between Mary Anne and the others "didn't amount to jack," and he rails against "these blinders...about women. How gentle and peaceful they are." The war was a crucible that revealed the nature of humans, and not just the nature of young American males.

A cheerleader-turned-Kurtz also permits O'Brien to break through the callous expectations of his readers, to bring the tragedy of war to life. "I mean, if it was a guy, everybody'd say, Hey, no big deal, he got caught up in the Nam shit, he got seduced by the Greenies," Kiley says (117). A female Kurtz helps O'Brien make what happens

in war a "big deal." Mary Anne becomes a symbol of the innocence once inside all the men, and her transformation mirrors theirs. "What happened to her...was what happened to all of them," the narrator says. "You come over clean and you get dirty and then afterward it's never the same" (123). Her stereotypical girlishness only makes the change more stark. She was "just a child, blond and innocent, but then weren't they all?" he asks. The future she loses—the gingerbread house, the lifelong marriage, the three smiling kids—simply dramatizes a similar loss experienced by men who, like her, find their gentle possibilities crowded out by the "wild creature out in the bush, or in [the] head..." (124). Nature without and nature within can call anyone, male or female, away from civilization—and war adds decibels to nature's voice. Mary Anne heeds nature more and society less, for in this story war is an eruption of nature, not an extension of civilization. Here nature takes humans to itself and obliterates culturally constructed cleanliness and innocence. As the narrator says of Mary Anne, "She had crossed to the other side. She was part of the land" (125).

In Gustav Hasford's *The Phantom Blooper*, protagonist Joker also "crosses to the other side" to become "part of the land"—but Hasford reverses the moral coding of O'Brien's story, making civilization the source of evil and nature the source of good. In "Sweetheart," the jungle setting permits an innate savagery to emerge, but in *Phantom* neither outer nor inner nature is evil. "I was not born a killer," Joker says. "I was instructed" (220). And it is civilization, not nature that is the tutor. "America made me into a killer," he says.

The novel traces Joker's journey away from the corruption of civilization to the integrity of nature. As one of a remnant of Marines left to guard the base at Khe Sanh until the post's dismantling, Joker seems caught in a culture of fratricidal violence. He terrorizes a New Guy with a grenade, allows a deranged Marine to be killed, and gangs up on the platoon sergeant—finally taking a razor and splitting open the sergeant's tongue. But at the beginning of the novel Joker is already searching for an alternative. His closest ties are to a group of disaffected Blacks who fight gallantly when attacked but who identify with the other side, seeing in the Vietnamese cause a reflection of their own domestic struggle. Together with the Blacks, Joker derides the Americans who embrace the war, significantly calling such affinity *unnatural*. "You some kind of *mu-tant*," one of the Blacks tells a gung-ho sergeant. "You adapted to this world of shit and you thriving on it....You be prayin' that the war don't *never* end" (27). Joker hides all day in a muddy slit trench and ventures out at night naked except for a cowboy hat—a remnant from a dead friend. This bizarre behavior saves *him* from "adaptation to this world of shit" and places him at several psychic removes from the "rationality" that prosecutes the war. Above all, Joker reaches for an alternative through his preoccupation with the Phantom Blooper.

The Phantom Blooper is a legendary Marine defector, "The White Cong,...the American VC" (5), who fights for the NLF, not just with a grenade launcher but with words. "Go home," the Blooper says, and the message

resonates. "We want to go home," Joker says. "But we don't know how" (6). Every night, a naked Joker goes out into the No Man's Land between the base and the jungle, hoping to confront the Phantom Blooper, whom he calls an aspect of himself—"the dark spirit of our collective bad consciences made real and dangerous." Joker's No Man's Land corresponds to his psychic location—alienated from U.S. culture but not yet belonging to anything else, not yet able to "go home."

Throughout the novel, "going home" takes on many meanings—literally returning to the United States, but also following the heart's deepest connections—in Joker's case, to his friends lost in the war, to his own sense of integrity, to original American values, to the person he was born to be. Joker tightens all those connections as he moves closer to the land—and it is his preoccupation with death that sends him in that direction. "They're all up there somewhere," he says of his dead comrades, "men who died not at a place but at a grid coordinate, scattered bones now, town apart by tigers and eaten by ants." His attachment to the dead makes him begin to imagine nature rather than culture as his home. He says, "I want to live with the tigers and the ants. I want to be with my friends" (52-53). So for all those reasons, Joker haunts the No Man's Land between the base and the jungle, making himself vulnerable to the bridge figure, the Phantom Blooper, who finally takes Joker captive and drags him definitively into the jungle. Crossing the line from his culture to nature takes Joker from ugliness to beauty. "All around me are living jungle plants full of perfect wondrous green," Joker says, "and everywhere I look I see jungle vines and ancient trees with light glowing deep down inside them and I surrender to the hypnotic enchantment of the world of green light and the Phantom Blooper drags me deeper and deeper into a vast and beautiful forest..." (56).

For over a year, Joker experiences life on "the other side," which in this novel does not mean exploring Vietnamese civilization or the tensions between wet-rice culture and rain-forest ecology. Rather, Hasford uses rural Vietnamese life to symbolize an edenic existence in harmony with nature. As a prisoner in the rice-growing village of Hoa Binh, Joker pretends to convert to the NLF cause. But his switch from the aggressive cynicism of Khe Sanh to quiet wonder in Hoa Binh is sincere. With grateful awe he describes rainbow-colored macaws, rustling palm fronds, and orchid-scented air. And he revels in the connection between the villagers and the land: "Men, women, and children work in harmony with *Xa*, the land, because the pull of the land is strong....In Hoa Binh the ancient bond of centuries, soil, and farmers is still strong," he says (76). He feels no tension between the village and the earth. Indeed, "the hooches of the village blend into the brown and green landscape so naturally that they seem to have grown right up out of the soil like large square plants," he says (62-63). Harvesting rice reminds him of picking cotton back in Alabama; he realizes that the Vietnamese farmers and his own farm family are fighting "the same war—grow to eat, eat to live" (75). The farming life is balm to his spirit. After a day of work in the paddies, he feels vital and proud:

I inhale the life-giving odors of earth, sun, sweat, and animals. My back is stiff and numb, but my body feels hot and strong with the good tired feeling that comes at the end of a day of hard work, when you feel like you've earned your supper and have earned your right to a good night's sleep, because you're free, and honest, and you don't owe anybody a damn thing. (80)

The feeling of authenticity that comes from reconnecting with the land is so strong that ironically it makes him feel "free" and "honest" despite his imprisonment and his hypocrisy. Even in an enemy village, reconnecting with nature makes him feel at home.

This feeling of belonging on the "other side" intensifies Joker's alienation from his own culture, expressed in particular through his horror at the U.S. war on nature. The NLF woodsman with whom he lives tells Joker that "every day...another whole forest dies from the smoke sprayed by American pirate planes" (70). Joker's perceptions of the U.S. defoliation campaign yields two contradictory images of nature—one, nature vulnerable and violated, the victim of the Americans; the other, nature mighty and inviolable, the victor over the Americans. In the results of Agent Orange, Joker sees the first image. He describes defoliated jungle "that is too dead even to smell dead," where the only life is "unnatural cancerous growths....monsters, freaks, and mutants" (96). In American attitudes toward the rainforest—sharply clear to him now that he can contrast them with those of the NLF—he sees the second. As he travels with an NLF unit, he says:

We move through the black jungle as silent as ghosts. We don't fight against the jungle the way foreigners do. The jungle is alive and the jungle never dies. The jungle is the one thing you can't beat, and the fighters know it.

To the Americans the jungle is a real and permanent enemy....To a place older than the dinosaurs come puny Americans wagging their fingers like stern librarians telling library patrons to keep quiet. Naughty jungle, say the white foreigners, and the jungle welcomes them in with big yellow flowers and funny brown monkeys.

When night comes, the jungle sucks their brains out, boils them alive, pulls out their hearts and eats them whole, then swallows up their pale pink bodies....(98-99)

Joker's perspective on Americans as both violators of vulnerable nature and foolish provokers of indomitable nature—underestimating both nature's fragility and its strength—helps Joker to redefine his relationship to his own society. He sees that the monstrous results of defoliation parallel the "mutant" deformations of behavior at Khe Sanh. Both are grotesque deviations from the natural way. Joker begins to realize that his alienation from his society is a function of its alienation from nature, his hostility to it a function of its hostility to his true self. "Americans no longer respect the land or people who work the land," he says. "Americans respect money, power, and machines" (76, 221). They confuse public relations and television with reality, turning the United States into a ship "that no longer touches land" (91). He

equates this distance from nature with a kind of mass psychosis: "When Americans lost touch with the land, we lost touch with reality....In America we lie to ourselves about everything and we believe ourselves everytime" (190, 216). He calls the United States "a constructed phantom paradise" and an "asylum" (216); and he agrees with the NLF printer who tells him, "Your country lives inside a dream and tries to kill anything outside of the dream" (116). Equating the U.S. with artificiality defined as distance from nature, Joker sees in the NLF reality defined as closeness to nature. "Americans can't fight the Viet Cong because the Viet Cong are too real, too close to the earth," he says (91).

However, it is not just the imagined unity with nature on the "other side" that gives Joker a vantage point from which to analyze his own society; war itself gives him an experiential perspective apart from the mainstream. The death immersion of war throws into relief his culture's death denial. "When your friends die, they own you," he says (211); this connection to the dead throws into relief his culture's disavowal of mortality:

We turn our backs on the facts, and laugh. America arm-wrestles with God, confident of eventual victory. Meanwhile, trapped inside the reality of death like white mice in a jar of black glass, we damage each other mindlessly and without mercy and without even a concept of pity, in our futile attempts to escape. Even against time itself, Americans think we can simply send in the Marines. (221)

Here distance from nature leads to gratuitous violence, a cheapening of life in the effort to deny the reality of death.

Similarly, because of Joker's war experiences, physical vulnerability looms larger than technological achievement. "When you get shot, it's different," he says. "Everything in life somehow ends up being different from what you've been told." A Vietnamese comrade had told him, "Americans are like a man who marries his bicycle. He brings his bicycle into his house and sleeps with it. One day his bicycle breaks down. Then the man is afraid to take a trip, because he has forgotten how to walk," (222). Shot in war, Joker learns that it is the legs and not the bicycle that matter, just as he has learned that death cannot be denied. Unlike his society, he has "touched land."

This war-acquired knowledge is suspect in a society committed to both the trivialization and the domination of nature. Back in the U.S., Joker honors his rural roots and tries to find some land to farm, all the while feeling "in danger" because he sees through his culture's imperial clothes. "In the land of a thousand lies, to be an honest man is a crime against the state," he says (222). To Joker, to be "honest" is to withdraw allegiance to "money, power, and machines," to affirm instead the primacy of nature, and therefore to identify with his country's most ancient as well as most recent enemies. "Like the Indians, we fight to stay on the land. On the land we are men. We are free," he says (201). And he tells a Vietnam veteran friend: "We're the VC."

Indeed, the "VC," embodied in the village of Hoa Binh, continue to symbolize for Joker what's on the other

side of his culture's split with nature—the home he seeks. "The only time I ever felt like I was being what an American should be and doing what an American should be doing was when I was a prisoner of the Viet Cong," he says. "I could be real there. I could be myself" (238). He thinks longingly of the rice fields and of the bond with nature and the feelings of potency and trust that come from that bond; and he yearns for a home where the living are connected to the dead. He remembers Hoa Binh as a place where "the dead can sleep, forever bonded to the living, in sacred soil made rich and fertile by the blood and the bones of their ancestors" (176). "Home" for Joker is a place that makes room for his dead friends; it is a place where "soil" is "sacred." Joker realizes that in acknowledging what his culture denies and in venerating what his culture degrades, he is taking on not just his government but all governments. "I've joined the side of people against the side of governments," he says. "I've gone back to the land" (190). Like "the land" in "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," "the land" in *The Phantom Bloop* is the source of truth; but unlike "the land" in O'Brien's story, "the land" in Hasford's novel is also the source of what's best in human beings.

In Lynda Van Devanter's *Home Before Morning*, connection with nature is the source of both the worst and the best. In this memoir of a traumatic year as a nurse in Vietnam and the difficulties of reentry into U.S. society, death immersion, as in *The Phantom Bloop*, also increases alienation from U.S. culture and closeness to nature. But the identification with nature is at first nightmarish, mixed with a horrified repudiation of nature that also becomes self-repudiation. Only gradually does the link with nature lead to self-acceptance, harmony, and peace. Van Devanter thus describes from the inside the psychological experience of nature as both enemy and friend.

Working in an evacuation hospital where she herself was frequently in danger, Van Devanter was part of a team that offered the first out-of-field treatment for wounded soldiers. Many incoming patients were dead on arrival; many others died shortly after. Because survivors were evacuated to larger hospitals, there was not even a modicum of visible recuperation to counter the constant presence of maiming and death. "Everyday, a new bunch of children, ripped to pieces," Van Devanter writes (203). She was inundated by a "seemingly endless torrent of human flesh" (166).

So Van Devanter was confronted unrelentingly with several aspects of nature—the physical components of the human body revealed by wounds, and mortality, the constant presence and triumph of death. In this war these aspects of nature loomed larger than anything else: wounds were not balanced by wholeness, nor death by life. In place of a reliable natural order there was something monstrous and out of control, warping time itself. "We were living by a different clock," Van Devanter writes (166). Time seemed to run amuck: In violation of expected processes of maturation, it was the young who died, while survivors found themselves fast-forwarded to old age. Van Devanter describes this premature aging:

I began feeling as if I were turning into an old woman. Holding the hand of one dying boy could age a person ten years. Holding dozens of hands could thrust a person past senility in a matter of weeks. (166)

It seemed as if natural cycles had imploded into aging and dying; it was logical to recoil from them. But there was no way to hold oneself aloof from the rush to death without disconnecting from ongoing life; a war-time defense mechanism quickly evolved into a peace-time handicap. Referring to this alienation from her own progress through time, Van Devanter says, "Vietnam had robbed thousands of us of a future" (358).

Many tormented years after the war, Van Devanter learned that this disconnection from the dynamism of daily life, from the physical experience of moment succeeding moment, was part of a massive suppression of feeling, itself a common response to trauma. In Vietnam, she was counseled to deaden her feelings for her patients, to think of the workplace as "an assembly line, not a medical center" (93). She says she and her colleagues learned to do anything to "block out the faces and moans of dying boys" (122). She deadened her feelings for herself as well; sometime during the year she stopped being able to cry. Numbness became not only a way of abstracting herself from the horrors of her situation, but of concentrating all her energy on survival. Van Devanter explains the emotional logic: "If you can't feel, you can't be hurt; if you can't be hurt, you'll survive" (167).

Thus feelings, too, like death and the physical experience of time, became antagonists—parts of nature to be held at bay. Merging with the outrages of war itself, with what Van Devanter calls "the total disregard for human life in war" (209), these aspects of nature came to seem not only threatening but contaminating, offering not only danger but taint. Distance from them seemed imperative yet impossible, creating a dilemma conveyed in Van Devanter's description of the monsoon mud. She writes:

We had cracks in the walls and floors of the OR. The mud that poured down the hill would ooze through the cracks and mix with the blood in ways that were reminiscent of a fifties horror film....Often we found ourselves operating in an inch or more of mud....[Sometimes] we had to lower the table and kneel in the muck. (180)

Here the mud that must be kept out cannot be kept out. Like the monster from a horror movie, it stalks its prey. Nature here is alive and persistent, invasive and pervasive, coming from outside but seeking what is inside, mixing mud with blood. The literal description of the mud becomes a metaphor for unavoidable contamination. "You come over clean and you get dirty," Rat Kiley says about Mary Anne. For Van Devanter, too, the experience of war merged with the "muck" of nature, becoming a kind of inescapable filth.

This characterization of nature evokes the overriding American metaphor for a losing war in Viet Nam, "the quagmire." As the swamp that couldn't be drained, nature uncontrolled, "the quagmire" overrode American plans with its own agenda. It not only refused to be

transformed but threatened to transform, to drag Americans down into itself and turn them into the stuff of swamps. Van Devanter spoke within the framework of this overarching metaphor when half way through her year in Viet Nam she began to refer to Viet Nam as "this green slime" and "this green suck," and joined in the common American practice of calling all Vietnamese "gooks" (219, 203, 156). "Gook" is an epithet that connotes primordial slime, nature's lowest common denominator, and that denotes a despicable sub-human apart from civilization. A "gook" is an inhabitant therefore of nature's realm, the kind of slimy being one would expect to find in "the quagmire." Through such denigration, an entire physical place and all its occupants were constructed as part of loathsome nature. Van Devanter says her feelings were conveyed by the GI expression, "Vietnam sucks," a saying that evokes the "sucking bog," and that excavates within the quagmire imagery a layer of sexual obscenity, making one more aspect of nature indecent and revolting. Nature as revealed in war was thus active, lethal, menacing, filthy, repulsive, contaminating, and obscene—something to which all decency was opposed.

But just as the mud could not be kept out of the OR, so the filth could not be kept out of the self. Repudiation fused with identification. The loathing of the outer world as a place of "gooks" and "slime" was matched by a feeling that one was oneself part of a swampy half-life. Van Devanter describes the "suck" of Vietnam as "in our very blood, eating away at us"; as she prepared to leave Vietnam, a helicopter pilot told her: "Vietnam sucks so bad it sucks Freedom Birds right out of the sky. Even if you make it back to the World, you find out the war's already sucked out your brains and your heart" (219, 222). One could leave Viet Nam and still feel engulfed and obliterated by "the quagmire."

Thus embedded in the scattershot cynicism of "Vietnam sucks" is a sense of pervasive taint, an equation of the obscenity of war with both inner and outer nature. The war ended but the feeling of all-encompassing contamination did not. The war-time aversion to life was difficult to overcome, as Van Devanter's narrative details; Van Devanter says she will suffer from the aftereffects of war for the rest of her life. Her narrative is thus especially illuminating where it describes the process of connecting back up with creation, and the role of nature in that healing.

During the war Van Devanter and her colleagues found ways of constructing psychic Noah's Arks to preserve remnants of life from destruction. For example, the medical staff adopted two banana trees and named them for a popular commander and his wife—"the Bernard J. Piccolo Memorial Banana Tree and the Elizabeth L. Piccolo Memorial Banana Tree." Newcomer Van Devanter learned that the trees' names must be pronounced fully and individually; to do less was "irreverence" and "sacrilege." This playful investment of part of nature with absolute value was one way to counter widespread devaluing of life. The staff learned to see the hospital as a "factory" and the patients as "not people...but merely bodies," but following a rocket at-

tack, Van Devanter saw the doctors rush to the Elizabeth L. Piccolo Memorial Banana Tree to examine the damage. "There's one thing you have to remember, Van," one doctor told her. "You can always get a new trailer, a new hooch, or another doctor. But there's only one Elizabeth L. Piccolo Memorial Banana Tree. The Army doesn't issue replacements" (101). Amidst the general cheapening of life, the staff preserved a sense of the uniqueness and irreplaceability of a living creature. They invited the trees on the ark of concern for life and saved them from cosmic indifference. At the same time, the trees themselves became an ark inviting the staff's tenderer qualities to board and thus to survive the war.

The intense sexual relationships Van Devanter formed in Vietnam functioned in a similar ark-like manner. She refers to them as "an island of sanity" that "[kept] us human in spite of all the inhumanity being practiced around us" (117, 122). Such relationships created "our own little world away from the war, a world filled with peace, a world where flowers grew and children played and men recited poetry" (123-4). Nature-as-mortality was countered with nature-as-sex, and one part of nature survived the ruin.

An ark is a pet world, full of pets; it is a toy, part of a game. The relationships were not "serious"; they did not last. Their frivolity, like the playfulness of the relationship with the banana trees, facilitated involvement by minimizing risk. It was possible to connect while still maintaining the protective attitude that it was only a game and "it don't mean nothing" (269). But as with all play, there was a serious function as well, an exploration and preservation of possibilities, a rehearsal in imagination, a preparation for some later time. When nature becomes a deluge, an enemy of life itself, the ark keeps alive the seeds of a friendlier natural order. The ark allows one to salvage synecdochic life from ubiquitous death. The job of the inhabitants of the ark is eventually to take over the world again, to turn the order of the ark into the order of the world, to turn the game into reality.

This strategy of using a part to reclaim the whole helped not only in surviving the initial trauma but in later healing. Back in the United States and plagued by suicidal depression, Van Devanter found it hard to overcome the negation of the self that was part of war-time dissociation from life. She writes: "The emptiness inside was so big that I thought it had consumed me. It was as if I didn't really exist. I was so small and getting smaller all the time. It wouldn't be long before I would disappear" (305). But there were times when the ark appeared, bringing with it the experience of reconnection with the natural world. "There was something about the mountain that made me feel almost like I was at home—my real home," Van Devanter writes of the landscape around her parents' house. "I walked the trails, breathed the fresh air, and looked up at the sun. I napped on a bed of moss, watched deer in the field, and listened to the birds singing. Each time I went back there, I found periods when the emptiness would be gone. They might last only a few seconds, or a minute, but they offered hope" (279). Such moments offered, however briefly, first-hand experience of a life vibrantly connected to the

natural world; they kept the possibility of such a life alive. Like the leaf a dove brought to Noah, they betokened forests. And they began to expand. "The sloping hills, the trees, the valley below, and the red mud—they all reminded me of Pleiku," Van Devanter writes (280). Through such temporary transformations of nature, the Bernard J. and Elizabeth L. Piccolo Memorial Banana Trees began to leave the ark and populate the world again, taking over first the mountain near her parents' home and then the landscape in Vietnam. They advanced the process of turning a flood of "green slime" into a "real home."

It is significant that healing required reclaiming not only nature in the United States but nature in Viet Nam, replacing denigration with appreciation. The recovery Van Devanter went through was complicated and, she maintains, incomplete. She found strength in several factors, especially solidarity and action with other Vietnam veterans, understanding of and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, and a return trip to Viet Nam. All of these steps involved going back into the war and liberating the site, the people around her (Vietnamese and American), and her own feelings from the "green suck" that had claimed them at the time. She discovered a parallel between the "gook syndrome" and post-traumatic depersonalization of the self. Turning people into "gooks" had cast them as obscene beings without a past or future—projecting onto them the self-image under which she herself was suffering. She realized a connection between seeing Vietnamese as "gooks" and feeling like scum. As Van Devanter learned Vietnamese and got to know post-war Vietnamese personally, she started thinking of Vietnamese as "human beings with a past and a future...just like us" (371). Simultaneously, she began to participate once more in her own dynamic movement through time. "I have finally started to believe once more in a future," she writes. "The emptiness is gone" (358-9).

In the depth of trauma, Van Devanter had equated nature, both inner and outer, with the war. Moving beyond the trauma involved coming to see the war as a part of the whole, not as the whole itself. "I've reached the point where I can truthfully say that the war has lost its ability to destroy me," she writes. "[It] doesn't own me anymore. I own it" (359). As she reduced the portion of the cosmos given over to the war, she was able to separate the Vietnamese landscape and people and her own war-time feelings from degradation. "It wasn't Vietnam that sucked, it was the war," she tells a companion on her return trip to Viet Nam (373-374). But the whole is never free of the part. Her "innocence," she says—her ignorance of that aspect of nature that war expressed, both inside and outside her—is forever gone. But the whole is still larger than the part. At the end of her narrative, Van Devanter describes a transcendent moment shared with a Vietnam Veterans of America delegation on Memorial Day in Vietnam. The group sat in a circle on the grass, holding hands in the "heat, moisture, and mosquitoes," she says, "for such were our memories of the surroundings of war" (374). As the veterans thought of their personal war, and of the millions of others, living and dead, who also served in Vietnam, they found that their

connection with each other was reflected in their connection with the natural world. They were looking at the "grass, the plumeria, the blue of the sky" but seeing "each...the others' hearts in our own." As they prayed silently for themselves, their fallen friends, and the world, they found an identity between their deepest yearnings and their natural surroundings. "The voice of [our] silence could be heard in the drop of humid air upon a leaf, the wisp of a breeze in our ears, the chirp of a gecko in a bush, the song of a bird on the wing," Van Devanter writes (374). This moment of connection with the natural order was a moment of fulfillment that included all the emptiness, a connection with life that acknowledged all the death. It was a moment when nature's amity included and transcended nature's enmity.

Thus in Van Devanter's memoir, as in O'Brien's short story and Hasford's novel, the experience of war leads to a renegotiation of the relationship with nature. The protagonists of "Sweetheart of the Song Tra Bong," *The Phantom Bloop*, and *Home Before Morning* all find themselves pushed by war far beyond their social frameworks. This increasing distance from culture is accompanied by increasing closeness to nature—though this nearness is interpreted in three different ways. It is perhaps inevitable in a society that has traditionally set up an opposition between culture and nature that any movement away from culture should automatically involve proximity to nature (or what is presumed to be nature)—a configuration implicit in O'Brien's and Hasford's placement of civilization and nature on opposite "sides," so that "crossing to the other side" means becoming "part of the land." However, there is more involved in the deepened connection to nature than this traditional polarity. In all three works, it is war's conjunction with death that makes nature loom so large, a magnified confrontation with mortality that precipitates and compels a more intense relationship with nature. Of course all three authors acknowledge, in these and other works, that there is much that is unnatural about death in war. Nevertheless, governmental responsibility or technological agency is not the same thing as the fact of death, and as O'Brien says in "How To Tell a True War Story," "At its core, perhaps, war is just another name for death" (87).

We can assume, then, that attitudes not just toward nature in general but toward death in particular give currency to the construct of nature-as-enemy so prevalent in U.S. literature of the Viet Nam War. O'Brien, Hasford, and Van Devanter use that construct, accompanied to one degree or another by the alternative construct of nature-as-friend, to say very different things about nature, human nature, and the war. Surrounded by death, the protagonists of all three works become more "natural": In O'Brien's short story, that change means removing the restraints from innate brutality, expressing the desire to kill; in Hasford's novel, it means developing an innate integrity, creating a whole that includes the dead; and in Van Devanter's memoir, it means first feeling part of a pervasive taint and then searching for a cleansing place in the natural world.

In all three works, nature appears as at times demonic—either as monstrous itself or as evocative of the monstrous within human beings. But only in *The Phantom Blooper* is nature also genuinely edenic, offering a new beginning, a real alternative to civilization's ills. O'Brien has Mary Anne articulate this vision—but only so he can expose it as a chimera. Van Devanter links harmony with nature to spiritual healing, but that harmony is not a garden where evil has no place. Rather, the life-giving connection to nature she describes is more of a momentary transcendence of evil than an alternative to it. In fact, part of the incompleteness of recovery which she talks about is the unanswered question of the place of war in the natural order. In this memoir, nature, however good at times, includes something horrifying, and there is not yet a harmonizing vision that brings the two aspects compatibly together.

Though these works by three U.S. veterans of the Viet Nam War offer differing world views, they all rely on a common language of enmity with nature. This study raises the question of whether writers who come from another tradition might offer a different range of perspectives. What portrayals of the effect of death-immersion on the relationship with nature would we find, for example, in literature that comes from traditions where nature is not polarized with culture but integrated into it? The predominance of the construct of nature-as-ally in Vietnamese and Vietnamese-American war literature suggests that such literature could provide an illuminating contrast with U.S. literature of the Viet Nam War.

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BRING YOUR LUNCH

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The phrase "bring your lunch" is one I first encountered on the playgrounds and streets of my youth. It was what someone said to a person they were going to get into a fight with. The words meant: "I don't know how well you can fight. I'm not sure who might help you or take your part." I don't know whether it's going to be armed, unarmed, 'clean' or 'dirty.' But this battle is certainly not going to be quick or easy for you. And you're going to be at it long enough to get hungry before it's over so you better have some food with you!" The code of the streets/honor was that you didn't quit, turn tail or submit easily, even in the face of overwhelming odds. But I vividly remember getting my copy of *The Vietnam Generation Big Book* (too big to fit into my mailbox) from my apartment manager and taking it to the barbershop with me and reading it in the chair. I was blown away by the range, depth, and quality of it.

Time is a telescope aimed at your memory. Mine works like a telescopic laundromat. Things get "cleaner" but all mixed up. Something is happening—I'm older than the president. Woodstock was twenty-five years ago. Deja-shock has set in. Now I know most of the old songs.

I had the same kind of reaction when Kali Tal sent me a flyer about an East Coast conclave whose focus and theme is significant Sixties events. A friend of mine, about two decades ago, said I was a "man of the sixties"—I resented that at first. I'm middle-aged now, but no antediluvian fossil or "older than dirt" type fixated in the good ol' days. I feel the same way about the title "Viet Nam Generation" sometimes. But there's nothing wrong with that phrase either.

The Viet Nam war is one of the shapers (distorters) of my age- and mind-mates. I still rate people by what they reacted to and how they acted and reacted—especially toward the war—'Nam. You could be for or against the war and I could respect and understand you and your viewpoint—if you have a good reason for having it. Too many people copped out. Or were indifferent.

With a yellow highlighter I started marking up the list of events that were on the flyer advertising the 1994 Sixties Generations conference. Then I alphabetized my personal choices. My list starts with Attica and ends with Woodstock. And everything on the flyer isn't highlighted. Now that I have a little perspective, what am I to make of a world where former Black Panther Bobby Seale is shilling for Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, poet/essayist Nikki Giovanni claims she's a born again Christian (she once advocated pissing on blond/blonde heads), President Clinton says he smoked marijuana but never inhaled and people cheer from overpasses for O.J. Simpson as he makes a run on the 405 Freeway to his mansion where cops wait to arrest him as a suspect in a double murder—thousands cheer, jeer and are fixated at home.

Sometimes I think the Gulf of Tonkin Incident was either one of the slickest propaganda coups of the century

or one of the biggest balls of confusion to ever roll out of a closet. That military madness at midnight was the "smoking gun" that let thousands of others roar. It was the provocation that led to justification. It sent us into the darkness in the tunnel that turned out to be a well. Well, well.

I think so much happened in the decade of the Sixties and its windup and rundown that there was too much going on for a society—let alone individuals—to absorb. The cultural changes that people went through (whether as a fad/experiment, a Dharma bum voyage or a hippie/psychedelic/collegiate/working-class/suburban vision) cracked the Liberty Bell again.

Forgetfulness and fundamentalism, TV, hedonism and dope can't totally fog over what happened and what's happening. Can it, Mr. Jones?

Maybe the "decade" really started with Fidel Castro. You can't package history in cellophane or stack it in neat rows. What Castro and Los Barbudos really meant was that the U.S. couldn't throw our man somewhere a bone from time to time to keep the natives down and the lid on forever. Even if the distance was only ninety miles from home. The urgency might be greater, but the closeness guaranteed nothing. And Castro stayed in Harlem when he came—cooking and eating chicken at the Hotel Theresa. Even his cuisine thumbed its nose at Uncle Sam. The powerful could be brought down. The winner might not do or be everything the people wanted or expected. But he was closer, for the majority, than Batista ever had been or would be. There was hope. And a chance to try something other than what hadn't worked. But the Viet Nam war was working in the background. Simmering on the international stove.

There was also music. Folk music. Blues. Gospel. Jazz. Country. Real country. I mean this was when people from Appalachia were called Briar Hoppers and the weekend cuttings and shootings could only be distinguished by race if the newspaper said W. Fifth St. (black) or E. Fifth St. (hillbilly). In my home town, rock hadn't even been invented yet and in between the Patti Page and "How Much Is That Doggie in the Window?" you could hear Little Richard and Marty Robbins, Tennessee Ernie Ford's "16 Tons" and, of course, "Ghost Riders in the Sky."

Grandmother had Duke Ellington's "Sophisticated Lady" on her Victrola (that's what she called it). Hey, Billy Strayhorn is from my home town! Later the Kingston Trio would get popular in college bars but by then I'd learned about Leadbelly and Pete Seeger and Joan Baez and the unamplified Bob Dylan, both Guthries (father and son) and sat on the grass on a college green in a spontaneous hootenanny and learned about Rosetta Thorpe and harmonized at informal hoots and met self-taught pickers who were remembering the stuff they'd heard at home or had to play despite being half-ashamed of it. It wasn't slick and commercial and you might go off-key or miss a chord (or part of it if you couldn't get your fingers to work) but it was real. I think that "folk" (all music is made by "folk") music, blues/jazz, gospel and the kind of country that starts tears, three-day drunks and bar room fights is the most profound—the real urgent passions and pains

of real people who kept the dirt under their nails, the pangs and joy in their hearts and the dreams that died or shrank when they moved to town or to the suburbs. Shuck the sequins and it's the same thing whether you're scooting a boot, shaking a tail feather or just dancing like they did in the old country/county.

I remember Attica because of a *Life* story, an epic poem I wrote about that uprising and, while working as a film extra, I met a young man who had been a *very* young man in Attica when the riot/rebellion/explosion occurred. I can see Nelson Rockefeller (who later died on top of his mistress) doing a Pontius Pilate bit as he disdained to get involved. I remember the rush to accuse the prisoners of *all* the guards' deaths... until autopsies revealed that some guards were killed by state troopers in their frenzied rush to restore "order."

Lesson: When you put urban prisoners—people of color primarily—in a prison in an all-white rural area staffed by people whose culture is different, you're asking for friction. When you put into play the justified and unjustified grievances of individuals, the ambition of politicians and functionaries, the morbid curiosity and not so subtle instigation of the media and its minions, duck. Conclusion: you ain't seen nothing yet. Society still hasn't solved the problem of how to punish criminals while fairly treating (not embittering) them as they make restitution to victims, get rehabilitated and/or trained. Soledad, George Jackson, the Marin County courthouse shoot-out and Angela Davis hadn't hit the national consciousness back then. Nor had the trend/style of wearing clothing that says "County Jail" in large imitation stenciling.

Black Power: The very idea scared the hell out of what would later be called "Middle America." I always thought it was the power which enabled me to do what I was capable of. The power not to impose my will on others but to keep others from imposing on me. The power to use my ability and talent to strive to meet my actual limits—not those artificially put on me to benefit others. That's what black power meant to me. Not that I would somehow acquire the force to make someone like or "accept" me, but the "power" (self-esteem/ respect/ motivation/ definition/ sacrifice/ ability to defend myself and insist upon fairness. Soul force, in short; not necessarily economic or military force or political hegemony. But then, I always was considered weird.

One summer I was working as a bus boy in a third rate, middle-class country club. I was trying to earn money for another semester of school. I couldn't afford to take a bus to Washington for the March, carpool there or take the time off from work, but I wanted to go anyway and so did my friends. I wanted to be in Washington. But I needed the money from the country club job—even if I did ride the bus to work reading a dog-eared copy of a book prominently displayed to any passenger who passed me, a book by a South African writer—*The Goddamn White Man*.

But life really wasn't that simple. Even then. Some people aren't nearly as important (or powerful) as they think they are. And they suspect it. Which partially explains their behavior.

There was another world "back stage" at the Club. A hierarchy based on color, gender, the kind of work you did (or were allowed to do) and the part of town you lived in; when you dropped out of school and how well you could kiss ass or emulate an ass kisser was also important. Everyone was looking for a way or a somebody up. You could drink your way out of life, like the dipsomaniac bartender, or just out of the place (some folks could do that and still get another chance if they were a "good worker"). You could try to sleep your way up the ladder of success (like some the female and male lifeguards). You could be a just-make-it-through-the-day person, an ex-con, one of the lost young-and-not-so-young—men who didn't have the grace to even succeed at a menial job, an uneducated and unattractive woman who didn't have the nerve or skill to sell it, a doing-the-best-I-can wannabe trying to imitate the tacky manners and class/lives of the clientele (even though you could look around you at the members and wonder if it was worth the struggle) or just hope your groove didn't turn into a rut.

Salad girls, sandwich girls, short order cooks, male and female locker room attendants, chefs and second cooks, secretaries, bartenders, dish washers, janitors, waiters (including the one who kept a bottle of gin chilling in the refrigerator and the one who played big-time player in the black clubs when he got off work), displaced hillbillies, groundskeepers, pro shop personnel pretending to status, caddies, various urban working-class whites: you get the picture; work and opportunity segregated by sex, race, class and contacts. Mostly the dregs were here, the luckless and the ones who hadn't gotten lucky yet—and wouldn't. And my grandfather. And the members—the strivers, the snobs, the Midwestern nouveau (mostly car dealers), the "old money" old people, the socially connected who once had money, the sons and daughters, the brats of the sons and daughters.

The day of The March I was a bus boy in the Club's 19th Hole, a slightly rundown bar & grill hangout for the slightly rundown members. Especially the ones who never got onto the course, or a clue in the first place, and had the broken facial veins to prove it. I was wondering if anyone would leave enough money on the tables for the waiters to pick it up and let a little of it fall into my hands. Or if I should, reluctantly, guiltily, take matters into my own hands. The TV was droning, the bartender was sipping bourbon out of a coffee cup—who was he fooling?—and wearing a vacant bovine expression.

Some coverage of The March came on. The waiters and bus boys, all black—Colored/Negro then—were watching with interest. Big Time Frank was rocking back and forth on his pointed Stacy Adams clown shoes. Ray the Bartender was glancing from the steadily dwindling level in his cup to the set. Lee, the hillbilly short order cook who usually looked like someone had hit him with a hammer in the mouth he hadn't brushed for a month, stopped trying to figure out his orders and watched. Probably had never seen that many colored all at once back in his hollow.

The atmosphere in the room was changing. The menials weren't quite as servile. Ray the Bartender was juiced and ready. Lee wanted to see what the next thing

would be. The speakers were warming up the crowd, though they didn't know it, for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech. Some of The Club members were spotting celebrities on the scene. Something was going to happen. One of the members snarled, "Can't you get something else on there?" Nobody jumped to do it. Nobody moved. The natives, like the announcer on the *Outer Limits* TV show, had somehow taken over the set. We controlled the vertical, the horizontal, the brightness. This was historic. *That* was historic.

We all listened to King—the help, and "members." And The Members. And saw the crowd and its backdrop, DC monuments. I thought about Emmett Till; how his face, about the same age as I was then, was on the cover of *Jet* magazine, the encyclopedia found in every black barber and beauty shop. It was a picture taken before he was tied to a gin mill fan and soaked in a river. How he'd been lynched down in red clay country, murdered like my Daddy's Daddy had been by the same kind of trash. I can visualize a picture of the killers in court, and other lynchers. Grinning. Red Man Tobacco made their cheeks look like those of oversized squirrels or chipmunks, though the killers were not nearly as cute as Chip N Dale. Flashing forward in a funny kind of memory/mind loop, I thought how one of my fraternity brothers/roommates would get his (strung up) in a Baltimore jail cell over a double cop-killing he didn't do. At his trial in Nashville the papers and the people had called him a college educated, outside agitating, civil righter, a militant. I'd asked him why he didn't run. He'd said to me, when it was still just a black cop who was dead, and he'd made bail, "But I'm innocent, man!" Wonder if he died that way?

The "Incursion" into Cambodia, the Nixon/Kissinger inspired madness that let loose havoc that is still seething and seeping. St. Peter is going to ask about that one. It brought no good, neither in military strategy "in country" nor any real advantage in "geopolitics" or "spheres of influence." It's just another reason not to like or respect Dr. Strangelove in either his Nixon or Kissinger mask.

I remember being sent Down South to an Air Force Base not too far from The Redneck Riviera for a military tech school. Before I went to my home base (Down South again) to get in some more practice before they sent me to Nam. Foolishly, I had gone out with some of the guys in my class to have a drink. I mean I'm from up North (Ohio, and knew damn well that crossing the river—heading North—was not like going through checkpoint Charley or through the Pearly Gates) but I hadn't totally forgotten where I was. We went into some likely looking restaurant and sat down. A Scottish waitress, still on her green card, says to our table, "I'm sorry but I can't serve the other gentleman." I was "the other gentleman." We left without a hassle. The waitress was nervous and upset. She was stammering after her boss had pulled her to the side to give her instructions.

There I was with those other young guys, all of us shortly to be "defending" America and "making the world safe for democracy." And I was going to put it all on the line to give some people I'd never seen, in a place I'd never heard of until a couple of years ago, what I couldn't have at home. That was after, out with the same guys again,

we'd all crashed in somebody's motel room after a weekend night of post-collegiate heavy drinking. We'd woken up slightly hung-over with rumbling stomachs and decided some food would calm us down. We'd gone into the first halfway clean diner to get something—preferably not eggs. The guy who ran the joint came charging out from the back waving a meat cleaver, spitting out unchewed pieces of white bread (which made him appear to be foaming at the mouth—he probably was) and screaming. "Get out! Get out! I ain't having this in here!" Neither did we.

Of course, I got used to blacks being "blackened out" on local broadcasts of network programming and the black swans and white swans swimming in separate groups at a park in Sumter, South Carolina. Wonder how much they paid them to do that? Yeah, I know about genetic, propinquity, etc., but that ain't the point. And what happened to me was business-as-usual for those who lived permanently in the South. My fathers and uncles a whole lot of other people had been through worse during World War II and other wars before and after that. Almost everybody black who was older than me—hell, a lot of the one who were younger than me, too, including my relatives—knew all about this stuff. To me it was not thrill or privilege to go into a "white" place, with our without Caucasian acquaintances, and, properly dressed and behaving and having the price of admission, be served.

I kind of got the idea that the American government probably didn't have the best interests of the Vietnamese in mind. Hell, I'd read the *Quiet American* and *Ugly American* in high school and knew some *really* ugly people. I remember the time I was out with a white friend from an old South Carolina and Virginia family, and we met some female friend of his female friend and found that we had some similar interests and experiences. We started talking in depth. She said to give her a call—no Southern belle obviously. My friend started hustling me out of the place. His friend started freaking out. "We don't do that down here!" he says. "Do what?" I say. "We're just talking." I don't plan to marry the girl or even ask her to go to bed. I have no reason to think she has any such ideas. It was a social situation. Two "Yankees" happened to meet for a minute. But one was male and black and the other was female and white. This offended local custom, local unreality. She and I were just taking notes; we'd have been on our way in a minute. I didn't have anything planned, nor did she, I'm sure. What we had in common was that we were from "there" and now we're "here."

Maybe that's what civil rights is all about. If she gives me the freeze, or I give it to her, that's that. Neither one of us has anything to prove. What, if anything, happens to us is up to her. And me. We all want—at least I do—all options open, even if we don't plan to take advantage of them. Hell, I already know everybody likes and wants different things and there is no secret glory or specialness about "having" somebody who's racially or culturally different. What's the big deal? Thomas Jefferson and a lot of other people found that out a long time ago. The gap that has to be filled is not between her legs, but between someone else's ears.

There's an old joke about an elderly black woman who goes to a fancy, newly integrated restaurant. A waiter brings her a menu. "No, I don't want to see that. Is you got any collard greens?" "No!" she's told. "Well, how about starting me off with some cornbread and pot likker?" "We don't have that either, Madam!" she's told huffily. "What about some pig feet and chittlins, then?" Upon being told that the kitchen doesn't prepare that either, she gets up and says, "Well, damn, you ain't *ready* to be integrated!"

Are we ready? I still want my options open. And I don't want to be thingified. That is, to be turned into, though of, or treated like a thing or someone's limited version of the amount of kind of humanity (subhumanity) they feel is allotted to me. Civil rights also means human responsibility and the acceptance of actual, not outwardly imposed, place in society. We ain't ready for that. Yet. Maybe we'll never reach that level. Maybe it'll always be a dream.

Maybe the Chicago Democratic Convention clash in 1968 was a Tet Offensive of Americans against Americans. Boss politics inside the convention smashed into dissidents inside and demonstrators outside. Mayor Daley's (in)famous malaprop about the policeman being there to "preserve disorder" was truer than he intended. Obviously, everything the demonstrators/rioters did wasn't cool. Neither was the police riot, portions of which were televised. Getting clean for Gene hadn't worked. Raising hell in the streets hadn't worked. And the trial of the Chicago 8 stretched the law—and justice—all out of shape. The real conspiracy was the one to crush dissent and opposition in any potentially effective form. No change was allowed. But it happened anyway. The Generation Gap got as wide as the Grand Canyon. Cynicism, despair, rage, disillusionment seeped into the body politic and the culture. Most people gave up; a few dug in for the long haul. The conniving and viciousness of The Establishment and the unsophisticated ineffectiveness of the Movement ground us down. An often vague—sometimes sharply defined—shift and clash of life-style, value system, expectation, and point of view was exposed and redefined even for those who hadn't gotten it yet.

Some couldn't stand to look. The trial was entertaining and absurd. The sight of bound and gagged Bobby Seale was a literalized metaphor, utterly symbolic: "I can't control your thoughts, but your ass is mine and I'm going to play lawnmower," was what The Establishment and the befuddled, entrenched traditionalists were saying. The status quo must be maintained, primarily because it is the status quo and familiar and change is undesirable—even if it is needed. I once had a white fraternity "little brother" who looked like Tom Hayden. Maybe that's why I liked him. Integration is a two-way street, with roadblocks at either end. He could stand up to the hazing and the harassment but not to his father. I hope he made it another way.

May 4th is my birthday. I was born in Ohio. The killings at Kent State happened less than eighteen months after I had been discharged—a veteran of Vietnam and the Tet Offensive—from the Air Force. I was in graduate school in northwestern Ohio, which is very similar in outlook to northeastern Ohio, when the Na-

tional Guard, bent out of shape after strike duty in the Cleveland area, took their venom out on student war protesters. I'm not liable to forget Kent State easily. Nor the murders at Jackson State. I'd been stationed in South Carolina and been through Orangeburg. The American government *seemed* no more tolerant than the Saigon government. And as quick to pull the trigger on unarmed people, cover up its deed and blame the victims.

Those two incidents (one on a predominantly white northern campus, the other at a black southern school) and the contrasting amount of media and public attention they drew cast the Viet Nam war in a strange light. When we heard the unfounded rumors and justification and witnessed the near hysteria that was rampant, we were forced to examine the knowledge, political sophistication, dedication, motives and stamina of all concerned. It became evident that justice in America was stillborn twins when it wasn't readily sacrificed infants. The Sunshine Soldiers and Summer Patriots of opposition (loyal) and faddists were easily silenced. The back of resistance, it seemed, was almost broken, or at least resistance was severely stunned by Kent State. Jackson State didn't even faze the country. We, the collective national conscience, were getting used to "those people" dying. It would take the deaths and the fear of death of draft age average Americans (Vietnamese didn't count) some time longer to move the glacial minds of America.

One of the most electrifying things I've ever seen on television was Lyndon Baines Johnson's address to the public. You know—the one in which he announced that he would *not* run for the presidency? JFK may have been the King of Camelot, but LBJ was the Prince of the Senate. He knew how to make it roll over and vote his way. What JFK spoke, very often, Johnson brought into being. He loved power and knew how to wield it. He also knew how to cut a deal and pay back those who bucked him. He was a master of patronage politics and the politician's art: What's real? What needs to be done? What *can* be done? He knew how to push the envelope and how to reward his friends and punish his enemies. He was more moral, less paranoid and more human than Dick Nixon. And LBJ had a tough act to follow. He was a pragmatist. Once, supposedly, he had a very bruising and unrewarding meeting with some Civil Rights (i.e., black) leaders. The position he advocated, he felt, was the most feasible. The Civil Righters disagreed and wanted more. Johnson supposedly said, "If the niggers want shit, give them shit!" I took that to mean not that he was racist, but exasperated and politic. He did what he could with the weak pieces of the Great Society. Conventional wisdom says the war dragged on and hog-tied him. *Quién sabé?*

Although I didn't know it at the time, the small "lunatic fringe" of extremist conservative students interested in mossback politics and retrograde philosophy—the ones I'd been amused by—would turn into the Young Americans for Freedom. Freedom to or from what I've never quite understood. They were political animals, interested in learning where the levers of power were and how to pull them. As their hair got shorter, they became even more unfunny. Now they're well on their way to ruling us all. It was a classic Roundhead/Cavalier game

and I didn't even know it. But I tell you what, they weren't funny then and they aren't funny now.

Scratch an American and find a fascist. Scratch a fascist and find something less refined—a white-supremacist skinhead. Scratch the skinhead and find a YAFer all neat and clean and with a bigger vocabulary, a better education and the same attitude and views. Now the center and left has got to find better and more compelling solutions and work at making them work.

Liberation theology is a very simple and powerful concept. What it says, vis-a-is God and the status quo, is that "it don't have to be like that and I didn't make things that way." That is, somebody might like things to be aligned as they are, but God don't want it like that. As opposed to being a justification for why things are as they are, liberation theology gave oppressed "traditional" Christians a reason for thinking that things don't have to be as they are and that good Christians are empowered to do something about them, with God's sanction, *now*. And you can *still* have pie in the sky. This world view is unsettling to those in power, those allied with the powerful, and those who have an otherworldly view of things. Suffering is not sanctioned or ordained by God; gender bears no relationship to divinity, and God, according to this view, is a militant believer in equal worth—it was Martin Luther transformed into Martin Luther King, Jr. (and beyond). Traditional theology may have attempted to counter it, but it has not overcome this challenge. Religion as it was has not recovered the minds or souls of those who have seen this light.

What can you say about Malcolm X? It's obvious he was and is more than the sum of his public parts. More than Spike Lee's movie, Alex Haley's articles and the autobiography Haley helped Malcolm pour out, more than a minister, a Moslem, a poster, a con artist, a fiery speaker and an excruciatingly logical debater. He was metamorphosis, transition. He was as much of a beacon for the psyche as Franz Fanon. He was a man before time, pop culture and the media turned him into an icon. Fallible—no inerrant pope; filled with expressed rage and hatred. And, in all honesty, as he himself admitted, some of that rage and hatred was misdirected and too inclusive. But he knew and did one thing for certain: he lived the old street saying, "Free your mind—and your ass will follow!" He lived that. His credentials on the street side were impeccable. Hadn't he been a hustler and been to jail? But didn't he also educate himself and make the analysis and say publicly the things that others did only when they were high, with intimates, or lost in bitterness?

And, although it bothered (and delighted) many black people and frightened many whites, he was *not* a Christian. Or a Jew. He was not a practitioner of a known or approved religion. He represented something beyond those two points of view. And he grew and struggled all his life. He fulfilled himself and showed that self-respect and self-fulfillment were possible. He had an alternative, viable philosophy, religion and outlook. His call for self-respect, self-empowerment and self-directed action frightened many people. The repressed and oppressed were scared because he drew such vivid pictures that

they knew his arguments were true and they were called on to do something to establish and redeem themselves on their own terms, without exiling themselves or committing suicide spiritually, physically or mentally. He frightened the oppressors and exploiters and, to use an old Marxist phrase, their lackeys and running dogs into fearing the loss of power and an end to ignorance among the contained. He terrified those who thought they might lose unearned social and economic status and the privileges of being white in America—as well as their lives, they thought, because that's what *they* would do.

While Malcolm was driven outside society and stayed out on his own terms, Fannie Lou Hamer was forced to the edge of society and pushed her way back into it, bringing others with her. Her words asking, demanding, to be seated and recognized as a full-fledged, legitimate delegate at a national Democratic convention kicked the politics-as-usual game in the stomach. She paid her dues too, before standing as the symbol of black Democrats in Mississippi. And she used the system to improve, practically reeducate, empower and give hope to many Mississippians. Through The Movement years and afterward she and lesser known people built a political movement in the bloodiest, toughest, most recalcitrant, vicious and poorest state in the union. She and people like her—the rural lumpen proletariat—were bent and delayed but not moved. The lessons of her struggle is what you can do with what's legal, working within the system. These lessons have been mostly lost in nonwhite urban and rural America, but since those who don't know history are condemned to repeat it, her work will be done again. Bob Moses and others are still on the case.

Ramparts Magazine taught me a lot. It raked a lot of muck. It did stories and held views that were off the beaten path. It wasn't always "right," sometimes excessive and shrill, but it provoked me into thinking—or thinking differently. It told me that the J in the RMK/BRJ construction company, whose vehicles and headquarters I had seen all over III Corps in Vietnam, stood for LBJ. It described in detail the use and effects of some of the exotic weapons used in Southeast Asia—some of which I'd helped fighter/bombers put on target (including the popular Cluster Bomb Unit). *Ramparts* poked its nose and shined its light in previously dark corners. For a long time it was one of the best examples of underground/new journalism. Too many people didn't know about it when it told its (mostly) true tales. But it sparked many careers and was an example. Now it takes an *Utne Reader*, a *World Press Review* and several other publications to fill the void it left.

Was SDS a fraternity for radicals? Was it too far out? Was it for the extreme iconoclasts? Was it an updated left wing utopia/dystopia in political action? It certainly didn't suit the mainstream of the left wing, to say nothing of the mainstream. Perhaps it was too elitist and theoretical. Maybe it was the home of the overprivileged who wanted to help the underprivileged and were ultimately just as wrong and full of it as those they thought they opposed. I had the feeling that they didn't really know or understand the sweaty, ungrateful, unruly and rowdy, fundamentally conservative masses or the legitimate

fears of the working class. They wanted to be white revolutionaries in a society that could barely tolerate change. But they tried. Too militant, avante garde and distanced from reality in the streets to ever make a revolution in the streets, SDS went from being an activist and intellectual elite to becoming, at its most extreme, isolated "radicals." America didn't want revolution. It wanted more goodies.

I left Tan Son Nhut, RVN, during the middle of the Tet offensive of 1968. My practical experiences, combined with continual reading and the way the world clock was moving, vis-a-vis colonialism, neocolonialism and the limits of power, had given me a sour taste in my mouth. I had the same feeling a sports fan has when leaving the stadium when the game isn't over but the poorly managed home team is behind, the game seems over, and no miracle is in sight. I'd seen the "frag orders," the daily bombing missions for the entire country. I knew we were trigger-happy and indiscriminately targeting any anything that wasn't white and was moving. And we had complete air superiority but still couldn't win on the ground with the tactics we employed. I'd heard the GI jokes about the best way to end the war: put all the "good" Vietnamese in a boat and carpet bomb the country from end to end; then sink the boat.

I'd lived in Sin City, Saigon, where even the rats were tough, and seen how corruption and neverending war had turned The Pearl of the Orient (and many of the people in and around it) into swine. I'd seen, up close and personal, the ignorance, chauvinism and money-grubbing of GIs, Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodians, cops, petty officials, ticket-punching clerks, colonels who wrote Bronze Star citations for themselves, children of war and the hoodlums called cowboys. I'd watched inflation destroy the efforts and savings of a lifetime. A bar girl, on a good night, earned a bilingual secretary's monthly wage. I'd seen compassion, courage, dedication, professionalism, belief and friendliness when they were in short supply and really needed. I watched one lifer sergeant, nearing the end of his career, extend his tour to prevent his son from having to do a tour of duty in Southeast Asia... and saw his son stationed with him. I'd come to hate another lifer sergeant who used to bum rides in a forward air controller's light plane so he could shoot people and water buffalo from the air. I knew what smallpox scars and uncorrected cleft palates looked like in adults. I'd seen a gang of three-foot-tall peanut vendors steal a watch and a billfold in less time than it took to read this sentence. I'd wondered if we didn't make as many VC as we killed because of our overbearing American attitudes. Which brings us to Tet.

We were bouncing champagne corks off the O Club ceiling, belatedly celebrating the Christmas and New Year we'd had to work, when loudspeakers asked all personnel to report to their duty stations. We never made it home from the 14-hour night shift of steering aircraft through artillery, guiding bombers to radio/radar beacons so they could remotely drop their bombs or guiding shot up recon birds (reconnaissance aircraft) back from missions over the North. We were tipsy as well as tired. The balloon was up. All hell was breaking loose every-

where. Planes were taking off and dropping their bombs at the end of the runway. APCs were clanking down base streets. MPs were having firefights at the foreign cemetery at the base's edge (it seemed appropriate—save them a trip). Choppers were killing South Vietnamese generals in Cholon, Saigon's Chinese suburb. What the hell, they were unidentified Vietnamese with weapons weren't they? And death didn't hurt them as much as it hurt us.

A young airman from my outfit, seeing a chance to wax something, climbed up into a radar tower and started whanging away. Some MPs, just as experienced as he was, blew him away and shot up our height finder radar, knocking it off the air. I got into the fray, trying to steer a chopper full of rifles, grenades and ammo to the U.S. Embassy in downtown Saigon where VC were breaking down doors and lighting up ground troops. I was giving the pilot street directions from memory and an old map, picking up what should have been visible landmarks from a Vietnamese Air Force sergeant and telling the guy which way to turn and when. He finally saw the Embassy building and left my radio frequency to try to talk to the people inside and arrange to leave his cargo on the roof. He never got high enough for me to see him on radar. He was gone for a while. Too long. Finally a guy broke squelch on my frequency and said, "Paris Control, I just saw a chopper get shot down by the U.S. Embassy!" I never did find out who got those guns. I don't think it was "the good guys."

I was supposed to be going home in the middle of Tet. I had taken the one chance I'd had to get some letters out to let my wife and parents know that I was okay and that they shouldn't worry if I didn't come home as scheduled. I managed to catch a ride to the head of my alley (I lived "on the economy," off base, since there were too many Americans in the Saigon area for us all to live in military housing). "I'll be back in fifteen minutes," the driver had said. "Be here or get left." The landlady in the building was distraught. Renting to GIs wasn't going to make her popular with the VC, who were flexing their muscles. "What we do now?" she asked. I spoke back, "I don't know, Momma-san, time for me to go to America." Sad, glad, and true. Bugout. Run. It doesn't pay to have American for allies. Usually. Lately.

My Hammond Flight (the one leaving with 101 upright organs) was a night flight. I was standing in the Passenger Terminal waiting for loading to be announced when I heard myself paged. What the hell? Hadn't some guy made it all through his tour when a mortar shell crashed through the roof of this same Passenger Terminal and onto him? Why should I get to go home? We *were* shorthanded. And the cherry lieutenant replacing me had never even seen a manual radar scope before, let alone known how to set one up, read raw SIF squawks (undecoded Selective Identification Feature transmissions telling whose planes were whose—hell, they were *all* ours), memorized all the terrain hazards and emergency strip locations (how long they were, what kind of surface and equipment they had, what to do when an F-102 flamed out—which happened about once a week to those Lead Sleds). But it was just someone's attempt to get the last ounce out of me—a courier was needed for

some classified material going stateside. Well if that's all you want...

The flight was strangely silent. I was thinking how grease pencil circles, designating the radius of artillery fire and the altitude the shells reached, used to cover my scope before the night ended. I tried not to think about recoilless rifles, mortars and Rocket Propelled Grenades. I had a window seat and could gaze out and down at the muzzle flashes, artillery and mortar fire, tracers, gunship fire, parachute flares and bomb blasts making the night wince. It was an aerial view of Dante's *Inferno*—my first real overview of the war. The fact that I had to take Air America, the CIA proprietary airline, to get to my first duty station, below the Mekong Delta, the southernmost military installation in-country, should have been a hint. Even when the Air Force sent me to Maine after Nam, it was to southern Maine.

When I got to Travis AFB in California I turned my load of classified over to some Security type who thought he was hot stuff because he wore a flight jacket and had mirrored aviator sunglasses and a badge to flash. I wasn't impressed. It wasn't until I signed the paperwork relinquishing custody of the Santa Claus bag of goodies that I realized what it was—reconnaissance film. "Oh," I said to him. "Giant Dragon stuff." (Giant Dragon was the code name for U-2 flights over North Vietnam and Southern China looking for troop transport activity; controlling these planes as they slowly spiraled down from or got up to spy altitude in Tan Son Nhut's congested air space had been a boring but necessary task of mine.) He was startled.

"How do you know about that?"

"I'm an air traffic controller from Tan Son Nhut," I responded. It started to sink in that I had routinely seen, done and known things most people didn't know or think I should know.

When I got off the plane in Columbus, Ohio I was blinded by TV lights as I walked through the airport. This stuff isn't for me, I thought. I'm not famous or a hero and I doubt if they're interviewing GIs in the street. I walked past people eagerly waiting some local missionaries who had just gotten out of Hue. A few people looked at me curiously for a second. I must have had a jungle air about me. But no one said anything.

After I'd said hello to the stranger who was my wife we went to a little dinner with some of the Ohio State graduate students she'd been hanging out with while I was gone. A TV network newscast with some footage from Saigon came on. I saw firefights on streets I'd walked, saw buildings I recognized, heard references to places I knew. These people, including my wife, were bored. Ho-hum. Their conversation didn't miss a beat. I decided I didn't like civilians. And the country was full of them.

When all was said and done, the Tet Offensive was some Vietnamese telling the United States to "Bring your lunch." A lot of people say, and can "prove" that we won every major battle during Tet. But the real effect of the Offensive was that it made people realize that this war wasn't going to be won easily—and it was going to take a while. And a lot more effort, blood, and lives, to say nothing of money. It made people ask, "Do we really want

to do this?" *Life* magazine cover: young men in their dress uniforms; photo story inside; everybody who bought it during one week in Nam. The light at the end of the tunnel was a headlight on a freight train.

Watergate was an exercise in excess, tackiness and lawdriness. The election was over before it was held. We all knew Nixon was going to win. What Watergate showed was the vindictiveness, cynicism, corruption, paranoia and dirty tricks that had become a political way of life. The Republicans and their leader happened to be better at practicing these tricks than the opposition. I mean, they didn't call the guy Tricky Dick for nothing. There were some honorable men and women in the Constitutional and political crisis that followed. Very few of them were Republicans. Representative Barbara Jordan was awesome and elegant. Senator Sam Dent was a good ol' boy who wasn't playing that good ol' game. Nixon escaped Watergate in death, but he may find that his eventual historical reputation is going to say that his boat sank and he couldn't walk on water.

Woodstock, the Fish Cheer, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix's version of the "Star Spangled Banner" (subversive as hell in spirit but now used as the soundtrack for a commercial) were the irrevocable notices—if short skirts, long hair, LSD and reefer hadn't clued you in yet—that this really was a different generation. Did I want to go to Woodstock? Hell, no. Not because I was terribly opposed to the music or the musicians—I knew and liked a lot of that music. But really, who wanted to spend the time and money to go all that way to hear those folks at a garden party given by a bunch of freaks? My tribe could gather without going nearly that far and, frankly, I knew damn near no one black who had an interest in going. It just wasn't part of our scene. Peace and love didn't really go all that far. They still don't. But the movie was cool and not nearly as uncomfortable or expensive and I still play the records. Still, there was something going on; there was a spirit of community that doesn't come alive too often now. And Janis and Jimi and far too many other flamed out on dope, dying way too young, leaving interesting music and harsh lessons.

All I can say, ultimately, is: 1) get a truly good and profound code of conduct and a vision; 2) get educated and trained; 3) get experienced; 4) get blooded. Go for the long haul and bring your lunch. America ain't through getting born and, young foggy authors to the contrary, history is hardly over.

Horace Coleman's collection of poetry, In the Grass, is available from Viet Nam Generation, Inc.

POETRY by CONSTANCE PULTZ

THE WAY IT WAS THEN

The old lady
with the fishnet gloves
and cataract lenses

marching with strangers
in the broiling sun
toward Capitol Hill

protesting
capital punishment
and the abolition of abortion

never married
never raped
never pregnant

never evicted in the rain
with her goods and chattels
lungs racked with coughing

never apprehended
in a chain store
the goods in her purse

never tempted to murder
or secrete
an arsenal of weapons

always living at ease
with old china
and heirloom chairs

except for this one time
breaking through the barrier
between herself and these others.

GUN CONTROL

I can't stand it
she said

my mother

meaning the wood thrush
the pheasant the quail

imagining them alive

instead of rotting
their guts into a burlap bag

give me that gun
she said

I'll show you
what comes next

that was my mother

before the blood dried
on the kitchen floor

and my father stopped
talking.

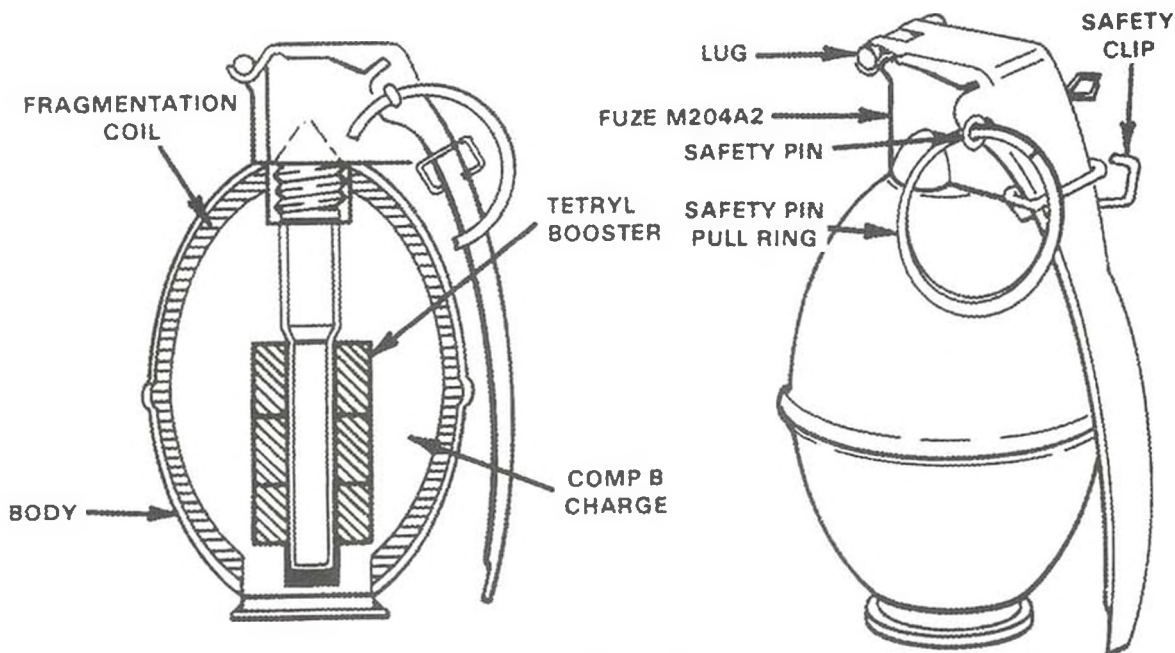
My Lai

He scissors out
every headline
he can lay his hands on,
tabling them
like jacks and queens
and turning a blind eye
to names and dates
the way he would
if he were dead.

He draws up
a new map of head
and hands and legs
and on quiet
evenings by the fire
fits them into place
in such a way
that nothing heroic
will be expected of them.

He lies down to sleep
and in his dreams
he fills a grab bag
with all the scraps
of flesh and bone
that are left over
and offers them for
anything they'll bring

Constance Pultz, 62 Broad St., Charleston, SC 29401.



POETRY by PAUL ALLEN

SELMA, ALABAMA

So after the unfortunate incident of the civil rights march,
a sub-committee said, *Let us find a family from up north.*
We will make them "Citizens for a Day,"
give them a key to the city.
We will take in good people, feed
them well, visit the sponsoring stores
and outfit them. We will send them on their way
with gifts, blessed and blessing.

And they said,
Let us use the very bridge the marchers took.
So they washed the best police car,
gave the sergeant flowers,
and stationed him at the base of the Pettus Bridge.
The committee waited on the Selma side.
Broad Street was alive, for a change.
There are outside agitators, but
most people want to be good.
People are basically good.

From early opening,
cash registers waved "TOTAL" to the locals.
Cash registers practiced saying, *courtesy, courtesy, courtesy.*
But the morning got on. A man. A man.
A Chrysler Imperial. A female couple.

Come mid-morning, the sun high over the silver bridge,
there came an ordinary Nash with a husband, a wife,
and a precious blond child. Photos.
The band played something traditional.
Flowers. Photos. Introductions. A speech. Photos.
The young couple were obviously overwhelmed,
and the child went to the arms of everybody—
always a good sign.

They went through some thirty stores.
Met the workers, the owners. Photos.
And the town said to the couple often:
This is the South.
We are the South.
We are the Selma we all know.
Love us. Love us.
And the typical couple in their ordinary Nash
were touched by the love, and said yes,
yes, they loved this town in turn.
They said yes, yes—at every sundown stop heading west,
they would spread the word about all the goodness here.

And the traditional family
was put up in the decent motel.
The next morning they would be on their way.

The next morning they stayed over.
They wrote rubber checks for a little cash
in each of the places they'd come to be known.
They entered each store with the garments from that store.

When the checks came back,
the committee looked into it.
The car had been stolen in Phenix City.
The man had jumped bail in Columbus, Georgia:
three counts of breaking and entering.
The woman had been picked up hitchhiking in Montgomery.
There was nothing on the child.
West, they had been spotted
in Uniontown late that morning,
the car and the couple only.
There was nothing on the child.
As far as Demopolis, someone remembered the man alone.

It just makes you sick: Almost to Mississippi
they found the Nash, a charred shell,
strewn with the remnants of all those nice things.

*Paul Allen, Department of English and Communication, College
of Charleston, 66 George St., Charleston, SC 29424-0001.*



Figure 6. Wetting around a position.

POETRY by JOHN WILSON

MEMORIAL

My hair seems to have fallen through my head—
sideburns become muttonchops, beard hanging in scraggly freedom;
while atop the head a dome, pinkish and picked clean.

I bow my face to look up there, marveling at the beginnings
of an oval—only a fitter's recombinant mirrors
will do to show me my back—the clearing strikes me
strange, as if druids in the night have razed
ground for a new Stone-Henge.

And sometimes, when I sleep, I hear a pounding,
as stones are plopped into oblong holes.

Am I a sheep, to be used for this? A fragment
of Mother Earth, laid open for someone's mystical
view? You notice (do you?) they pride themselves
on their insights; yet none has—ever—
followed me close into my hole, and learned secrets.

Mystics are a sorry breed. Like sociologists, they feign
study of profound truths, to hide their shallowness.

I knew one once. I knew her. She needed me.
She didn't know. She left and was wrecked.
My only use stillborn.

Now I stand motionless, everything around me
reflecting something else. I'm rooted to the earth.
She holds me unnourished, bare, angry at idle eyes

BEING WHITE

Being white, and driving through Detroit,
I rolled windows up, though it
was one hot summer day, and pretty
flowers of some sort—broad yellow petals,
brown bullseye—rioted in what was like
gravel at the base of a building.

It was either a factory or apartments.

I remembered being maybe five, a silo seen
in the country, along a trip to Kentucky,

in a field by a barn equally dull red;
silo odd-shaped, a comet head (I see now);
especially I remember the so soft
wondrous voice sweeping five-year-old-self,
asking, what could live in there?

John Wilson, 26748 Hampden, Madison Heights, MI 48071.

"CHALE CON LA DRAFT": CHICANA/O ANTIWAR WRITINGS

George Mariscal, Dept. of Literature, University of California, San Diego.

- I. We carry proudly our differences in culture, respect them ourselves and make others respect them.
- II. We refuse to acknowledge any form of false superiority over any other human group and refuse to accept hatred for others as a positive quality in ourselves.
- III. We stop pursuing the myth of the "hundred-percent" all-American as perpetuated by the Anglo-American media and educational system.
- IV. We relentlessly fight for our rights without a backward step and with the dignity and courage traditional to our culture.

This positive and defiant affirmation of Chicano identity might have been written last month during the high school walkouts that took place across California. In fact, it was written in 1970, 24 years ago, at the height of the Vietnam era protests and the Chicano Movement. I do not want to make the mistake of invoking the 1960s as a source of political strategies for the 1990s. But in the wake of renewed racist attacks upon Chicano/Mexicano people, a review of earlier struggles may provide us with inspiration and ideas for the present. I believe that any retrospective analysis of the Vietnam era is of little value unless it is placed in rigorous dialogue with our own moment.

Los corts by Carmen Tafolla (1978)

Teófila Hernández de Soto, at your service. I have many sons and daughters and they have never abandoned me. All of them are married except my youngest son Rudy (I named him Rodolfo, after my brother). That's him, the one in the soldier's uniform. Yes, he went to Vietnam, and thank the lord they sent him back safe and sound. It's just that they took him away as a young boy, outgoing and always smiling, and now he looks so sad and sometimes gets into fights. He tells me that it's because he's Mexican. And I tell him that it was worse before, that his father had to defend himself too, that it's been this way for a long time, that he shouldn't get mad. But he can't find a job, and sometimes, I understand and I get angry, but only here, inside. Here way inside, and I don't say a word to anyone.¹

Since the passage of Proposition 187, many stories such as this one have been told. All those who are excluded from the "our" in the "Save Our State" initiative must either insist upon their rights or remain silent, despite the fact that some of our families have resided in this region for many centuries. Chicano/Latino and Asian-American contributions to the building of the Southwest are erased together with the tremendous sacrifices made by both groups in the prosecution of U.S. military adventures.

"Corrido de la Guerra" (1972)

Nos dicen los generales
que la guerra siempre se hace
con bastantes mejicanos

y manda 'los recruiters'
para enganchar a chicanitos
que se venden por frijoles.

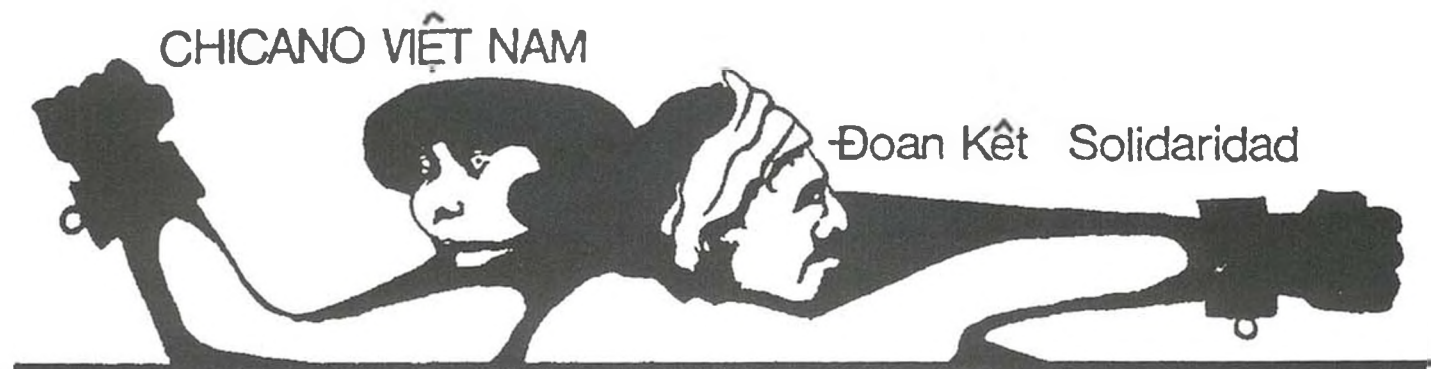
Pero hombre de la Raza
oigan este canto
más muertos no queremos

Ya saben los generales
que ni caro ni barato
comprarán nuestros hermanos.

Pero como es bien sabido
que pa' mantener la vida
la guerra no queremos.

(The generals tell us that wars are always fought with lots of Mexicans, and they send the recruiters to snatch up Chicanos who sell themselves for nothing. But Chicanos, hear this song—we want no more dead. Now the generals know that our brothers will not be bought. They know that in order to sustain life, we say no to war.)

In December of 1993 I attended a symposium at the University of Notre Dame entitled "America and Vietnam: From War to Peace." Two aspects of the conference were immediately striking: 1) the homogeneous composition of the participants and the audience, and 2) the inclusion of a single session on "Minorities in the War" as distinct



and separate from all other sessions. We might attribute the fact that virtually no African Americans or Latinos attended this particular meeting to its academic focus or even to its location. A more likely explanation, however, has to do with the ways in which "Vietnam War studies" as a sub-discipline of American studies has come to reflect academic life as a whole, that is, the domain predominantly of caucasian middle-class European-Americans. That this erasure should occur in a research and teaching area dedicated to the study of a war fought in great part by working-class people of color is, I would argue, an intellectual and political problem of some magnitude.

I am not claiming that the conference organizers were derelict. They acted in a manner typical of the entire field of Vietnam War studies. Virtually every major anthology devoted to the Vietnam period and its cultural artifacts lacks contributions by minority scholars or accounts by soldiers of color. Representations of the Vietnam era continue to appear at an amazing rate; scholars are now publishing oral histories of GIs from specific regions of the US. Yet the only oral history of the war focussed on the Chicano experience had to be written and published by one veteran (Charley Trujillo) who was told by major publishing houses that the subject matter of his book was too narrow. Trujillo's case is symptomatic of a general amnesia regarding Chicano veterans that affects almost all cultural and critical production.

The "white-washing" of the war also has taken place in the accounts of the anti-war movement. It is a little known fact outside of the Southwest that Chicanas and Chicanos organized and demonstrated in some of the largest anti-war rallies of the late 60s and early 70s. For the first time anywhere in the country, a large segment of the ethnic working-class joined students and others to protest the war. The most famous demonstration, August 29, 1970 in Laguna Park in East L.A., marked the high point of Chicano mobilization. Estimated attendance was between 20,000 to 30,000 people. In the police riot that ensued, three people died including Rubén Salazar, an L.A. Times reporter who had recently returned from assignments in Saigon and Mexico City, and had begun to write investigative pieces exposing police brutality in the Chicano/Mexicano community.

The origins of the National Chicano Moratorium Committee are complex. Two of the key players were Ramsés Noriega, a UCLA student who had gained organizing experience with Cesar Chavez, and Rosalío Muñoz, active in student reform at UCLA and elected student-body president in 1968 (with Noriega as campaign manager). After a long and arduous decision-making process during which they consulted with Chicano/a leaders up and down California, it was decided that Muñoz would refuse induction into the U.S. military. On September 16, 1969, he spoke to a large gathering in downtown Los Angeles:

Today, the sixteenth of September, the day of independence for all Mexican peoples, I declare my independence of the Selective Service System. I accuse the government of the United States of America of genocide

against the Mexican people. Specifically, I accuse the draft, the entire social, political, and economic system of the United States of America of creating a funnel which shoots Mexican youth into Viet Nam to be killed and to kill innocent men, women, and children.²

Working with the Brown Berets (a grass-roots and self-defense community organization based in East L.A.) and with help from other groups including Jewish foundations from L.A.'s Westside, Muñoz and Noriega built the Moratorium into a potent political force. Although its message was neither separatist nor ideologically leftist (its first demonstration, for example, was held at Eugene Obregón Park, a site honoring a Chicano Korean War hero), the Moratorium *was* concerned with the farm-workers' struggle, educational issues, police brutality, and international solidarity with Third World peoples.

By late 1969, Chicano magazines and journals were reporting numerous accounts of draft resistance and refusals of induction. In both Spanish and English, young Chicanos were urged to just say no:

Carnales, the government that seeks to induct you into military service is the same one that allows and promotes discrimination in employment, low wages for farm workers, one-sided and prejudicial educational programs, urban redevelopment, and a thousand other oppressive conditions. And then, they ask you to go defend and perpetuate this system with your life. ¿Qué creen que somos? BURROS? Those Gabachos even ask you to impose this system of oppression upon the people of Vietnam, Santo Domingo, Bolivia, and many other countries, as well as upon our own people.

Hermanos, the peoples of those countries ARE NOT our enemies. Our enemies are the racists and greedy GABACHOS, and their Tacos, who grow richer every day on the sweat, tears, yes, and on the blood of chicanos, blacks, and other minorities. OUR WAR FOR FREEDOM IS HERE not in Viet Nam.³

In some cases, the attempt to sustain an analysis of the war that employed class as its basic principle faltered under the pressure of racial and ethnic antagonisms. In an article titled "Why the Gringo Doesn't like to be Drafted," one writer complained: "Today, almost everyone who gets drafted goes to Vietnam and the chances are very good that he will get shot or killed. This still brings approval from the gringo, especially since he himself does not like being killed in such a stupid war."⁴

The issues of class and "race" appear in a strong way in the anti-war productions of the cultural arm of the United Farmworkers' union. In the Teatro Campesino's one-act play, *Vietnam Campesino* (*Vietnam Peasant*, 1970), we witness a scene in which the young Chicano soldier (called *el hijo*, the son) is ordered into battle:

General - I want you to burn the house of these farmworkers, boy.

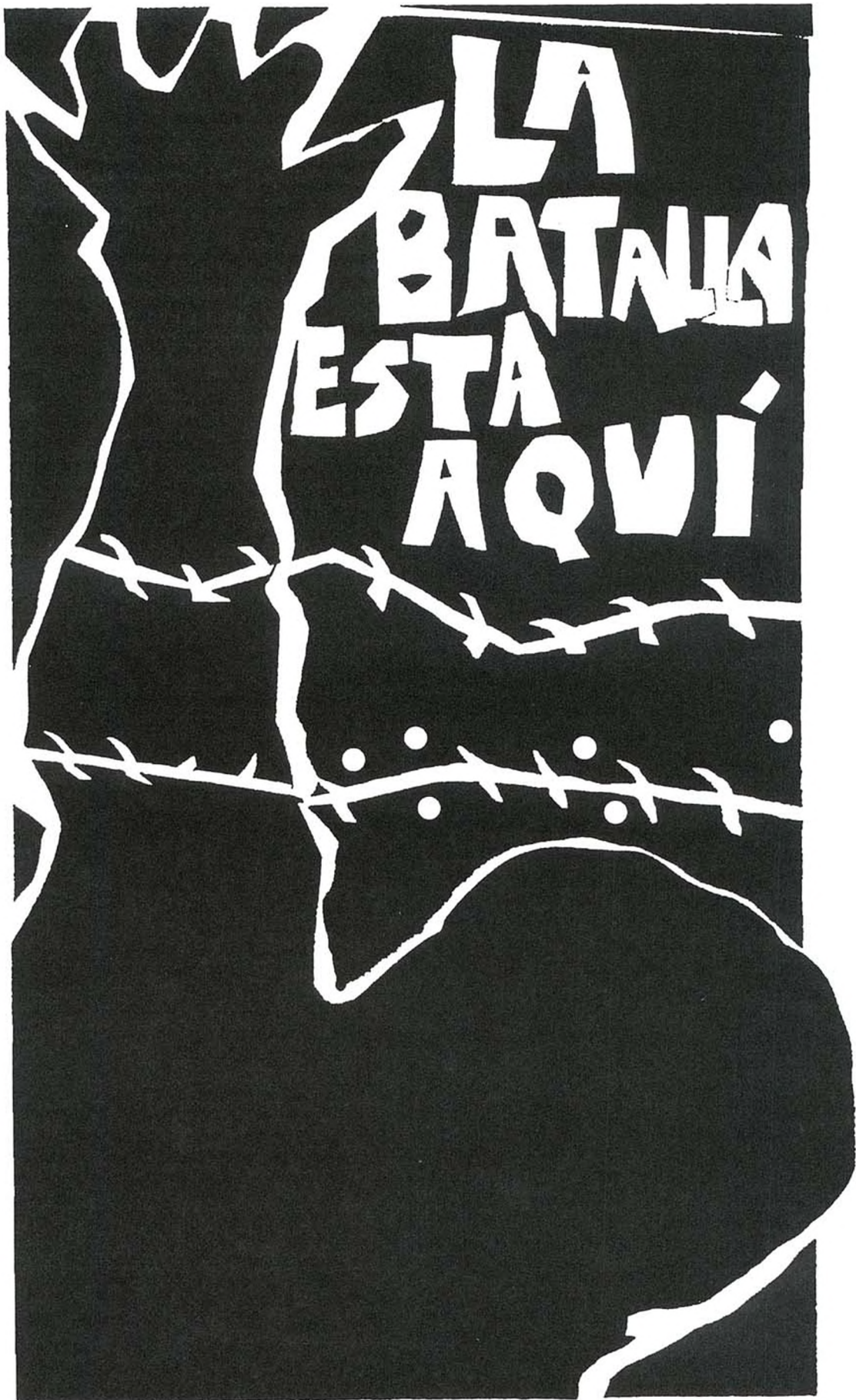
Hijo - Yes, sir!

The soldier moves toward the campesinos, who hold up a paper cut out of a small labor camp shack. They wave at him.

Campesinos - Hello, hijo.



**i FUERA DE
INDOCHINA !**



Hijo - (*Turns back to general*) Hey, I can't burn my parents' home.

General - Not those farmworkers, stupid. (*Points at Vietnamese*) These farmworkers.⁵

Or as Johnny the buck private in the play *Soldado Razo* writes to his mother: "Amã, I had a dream la otra noche. I dreamed I was breaking into one of the hooches, así le decimos a las casas de los Vietnamesees. I went in firing my M-16 porque sabía que el village estaba controlado por los gooks. I killed three of them right away, but when I looked down it was mi'apa, el carnalillo and you, jefita. I don't know how much more I can stand. Please tell Sapo and all the vatos how it's like over here. Don't let them..."⁶ Johnny's nightmare that the dead Vietnamese were in fact his father, mother, and brother concretizes the identification with "the enemy," and is transformed into an anti-war message aimed at his friends back home. As the Chicano anti-war movement gained momentum on the homefront, the Chicano G.I., with his unique status as soldier of color often with a farmworker background, also began to question his role in a massive military onslaught directed against a peasant society. It was this unique intersection of class and ethnic identities that mark the Chicano experience of Vietnam as different from that of other groups, and may be one reason why that experience has yet to be included in historical accounts of the war.

In their 1972 *La batalla está aquí* (*The battle is here*), Lea Ybarra and Nina Genera produced a bilingual pamphlet calling for an end to Chicano participation in the war and offering "legal ways to stay out of the military." By including a number of graphic photographs of maimed and wounded Vietnamese children, Ybarra and Genera implicitly indicted Chicano soldiers in the commission of atrocities, and openly posed the question "What can you do to keep Chicanos from going to Viet Nam and killing or mutilating beautiful children? We only lose our men and our honor and pride by participating in or promoting the killing of thousands of men, women, and children."⁷ The text includes a complete explanation of deferments and strategies for avoiding the draft as well as, in the section written in Spanish, the interesting "Letter to the North American People from Vietnamese Catholics" which made the following argument: "Those whom the U.S. accuses of being communists are, in reality, our brothers and sisters, our relatives and our friends. They are peasants and workers who only request one thing: to be able to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow in a country free of foreign troops... We share with you our faith in Christ and we ask in the name of the religion we share that you help us stop this cruel war."⁸ The appeal to the Chicano community's Catholicism as a source for anti-war activism was ironic given the official U.S. Church's hawkish stance. But by 1970, the Church hierarchy was increasingly losing its grip over many of its Mexican-American parishioners.

Despite the radicalization of some segments of the Chicano community, its dominant institutions were either openly or tacitly pro-war. The role of the Catholic Church is an interesting one in this regard. Without a

single Spanish-surname in its entire North American hierarchy (the first "Hispanic" bishop was appointed in 1970), the Church leadership was inattentive to political changes taking place among Mexican-Americans. In 1970, the Los Angeles-based reform movement—*Católicos por la Raza*—demanded that the Church express public support for on-going struggles such as the farmworkers' boycotts and the anti-war movement. Cardinal McIntyre stated that the Church would remain "neutral" on the issue of the war, and the local Church hierarchy claimed to lack sufficient funding to provide support for political projects despite the fact that it recently had financed an opulent new church, St. Basil's, on the Westside. It was this volatile situation that led to the demonstration and police riot described in the opening chapter of Oscar Zeta Acosta's novel, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973).

Despite their avowed neutrality, at the level of the individual parishioner or member of the clergy, Church patriarchs exerted subtle pressure to support official US foreign policy. Acosta refers to this practice in his description of McIntyre as "the holy man who encouraged presidents to drop fire on poor Cockroaches in far-off villages in Vietnam."⁹

"Corrido de la Guerra"

Por el sureste ha llegado
la noticia muy alegre
que el Chicano es diferente
Pues el Pueblo ya está en contra
los imperialistas ricos
que explotan a la gente
Pero como hermanos somos
la lucha compartimos
con todos los del mundo.
Viva la revolución
bajo con capitalismo
viva lucha en general
El veinte y nueve de agosto
para unirse en la batalla
salieron los Chicanos
Y vamos a cumplir
con la marcha de la historia
para liberar al pueblo \

Viva la lucha aquí
viva la causa en la historia
La Raza llena de gloria
la victoria va cumplir.

(*Across the Southwest the news has spread—the Chicano has changed. The people are now opposed to the rich imperialists who exploit them. As brothers, we share the struggle with others all over the world. Long live the revolution, down with capitalism, long live the struggle! The 29th of August, Chicanos went out to join the fight. And we will comply with the march of history in order to free the people. Long live the struggle here, long live the struggle in history. La Raza will gloriously win the final victory.*)

By the early 1970s, the rhetoric of the Movement had become increasingly radical. Incisive analyses of the political economy of the war linked local issues to a critique of U.S. imperialism and all of its facets as well as

to liberation movements around the world. In Nephtali de León's play, *¡Chicanos!: The Living and the Dead!*, the martyred figure of Rubén Salazar (in the character of Manuel) is juxtaposed to that of Ché Guevara, who himself had been assassinated some three years earlier. El Ché criticizes the efforts of César Chávez, suggesting that under Chávez's leadership the farmworker simply had moved from being a slave, to being a slave with a contract. With regard to Vietnam, the play declares: "As to the war hermanos... we will no longer be cannon fodder for the materialist capitalists who are getting rich off the blood of Aztlán. Yes, we are a brave people, but we'll melt the medals we have won to throw back at them, hermanos."¹⁰ The final act closes with a call for armed insurgency as an act of self defense. Throughout the Southwest, revolutionary groups such as the Communist Collective of the Chicano Nation headquartered in Albuquerque, Nuevo Mexico, echoed the call.¹¹ In Berkeley and New York, the Chicano Vietnam Project declared: "As Third World people we know that racism, the same racism directed against us everyday, is one of the biggest pillars of the Vietnam War. The U.S. government could not conduct the same kind of war it is waging in Vietnam against a white people. We Third World people are then forced into the military to kill and suppress our fellow victims in the Third World, in this case the Vietnamese, who will never accept colonization by the U.S. any more than we can continue to do so."¹²

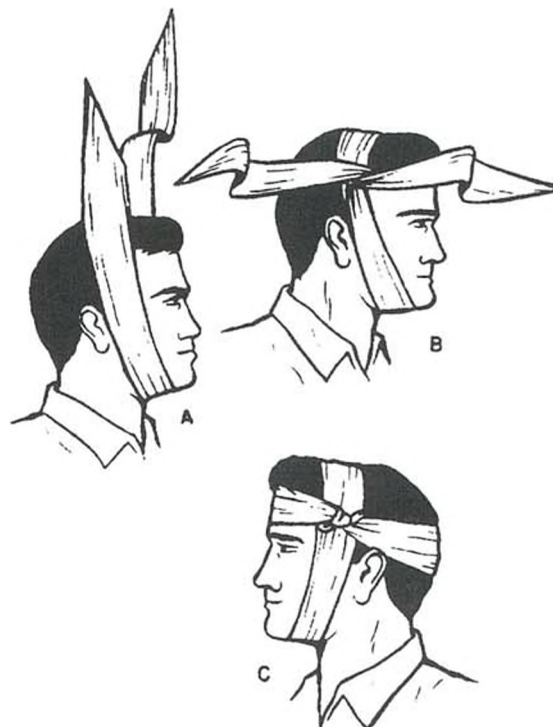
While it may be true that the heroic rhetoric of these writings does not translate well to our own moment, can there by any doubt that the present is no less filled with dangers for the Chicano community? Proposition 187 is only the most obvious manifestation of a reinvigorated xenophobia exacerbated by new forms of global capitalism and neocolonialism. It is not surprising that, despite the so-called end of history proclaimed by conservative ideologues after the demise of the Soviet state, the proponents of 187 continue to seek refuge in the language of the cold war. (I would offer just one example—At a recent public meeting in Sherman Oaks, California, opponents of 187 were shouted down with cries of "leftists, liberals, ACLU communists" and then physically assaulted). As we approach the end of the century, it is not apparent to what extent a new class of Chicano and Chicana professionals (and here I include academics) will cast their lot with the status quo or choose to build upon an earlier generation's protests. What is clear, twenty-five years after the official end of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, is that the struggle for economic and social justice, in California, in the nation, and around the world, is far from over.

NOTES

¹ In Rosa Raquel Elizondo, ed., *Encuentro artistico femenino* (Austin: Casa/Tejidos, 1978): 40.
² Author anonymous (my translation). In Lea Ybarra and Nina Genera, *La batalla está aquí: Chicanos and the War* (El Cerrito, CA.: Chicano Draft Help, 1972): 49. Lea Ybarra has

continued to research Chicano experiences of the war. See "Perceptions of Race and Class among Chicano Vietnam Veterans," *Vietnam Generation: A White Man's War: Race Issues and Vietnam I* (Spring, 1989): 69-93.

³ Rosalío Muñoz, personal collection.
⁴ *La Raza Yearbook* (May 11, 1968): 3.
⁵ *La Raza*, vol. 2 (December, 1969): np.
⁶ Luis Valdez y El Teatro Campesino, *Actos* (Fresno: Cucaracha Press, 1971): 125-26. The actos dealing with Viet Nam are discussed briefly in David J. DeRose, "Soldados razos: Issues of Race in Vietnam War Drama," *Vietnam Generation: A White Man's War: Race Issues and Vietnam I* (Spring, 1989): 38-55.
⁷ Valdez: 145.
⁸ Ybarra and Genera: 5.
⁹ Ybarra and Genera: 34.
¹⁰ Acosta, *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (New York: Vintage, 1989): 13.
¹¹ Ybarra and Genera: 49.
¹² In *5 Plays* (Denver: Totinem, 1972): 49. According to the biographical information provided, after spending five months in the U.S. Army, Nephtali de León deserted to Mexico.
¹³ Thanks to Christine Marin of Arizona State University for bringing this group, which for a short time in the early 1970s published "El Amanecer Rojo" ("The Red Dawn"), to my attention.
¹⁴ Ybarra and Genera: 49.



POETRY by DAVID L. ERBEN

WOUNDED KNEE CYCLE

the listless ghosts tilt their heads to the left a black bison head has something iron for an eye a mostly separate creature a brown-winged owl a head and eyes a corpse pushes its wet black tongue towards me and what emerges is another arm one with bulging muscles on the sides on the shoulder's low plane the side of an open dirt grave leans into me a heap of darkness beside it this may not be night a crow and a large white abstraction a maggot's projection larger fatter french-kissing nearby atop a Hotchkiss gun a row of Hotchkiss guns I'm too tired to push away the dirt grey ghosts and corpses of people and animals and dreams I'm slouched down uncomfortably on frozen ground I see owl wings with fingers at their tips resting and holding a map a white owl cruel beak hunches over a lectern with a history book and a newspaper the date is December 29 1890



Some frozen arms came uncrossed in the cold night, their palor turned to satin, and some flapped like branches with a black moon leering through, only inches from where thread leaves the cloth for what will never be shrouds.



the wind is a constant process across Wounded Knee it moves in stages first into toes then belly then nose then brain the wind rips and tears sometimes its scarlet-colored, shamblin, laundered becoming opaline the sun is setting but its dark penumbra remains eyes that face the camp are framed by metal not eyelashes a man looks through a cross-hair gun site a man looks through a long box attached to his face there's my face featureless and shapeless like dark moss, planes of flashing light curling smoke I see bodies stained with bright blood I see some sort of eye in pus it sees my face which is sadness

David L. Erben, Dept. of English, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

POETRY by CAROLE TEN BRINK

EVOLUTIONARY RAG AT THE CHAPEL TURNED DISCO

In the disco lights, in the nights of our falling, we primitives dance to electronic moons. We etch our chemistry into the black space beyond

and dare gaze through our trance, at the whirling stars, at the threat which has seized us, at that unthinking hand, spanning ages to reach us, from quarks to DNA up into our brains through this river of matter. Now, that hand thrusts upon us. Finally pushed onto center stage, we dance

we dance for the earth in rags, we dare not stop the music, or ever break up the moment's long passage from melody into this tribal beat. Our throats grow parched but our energy continues to mount. Strobe lights split up our frenzy to make of our bodies a hieroglyphics of comfort.

Our elders' perturbed brows wear down, as they witness these rapid mutations. We gaze up in the high pews to their faces, these icons from our history, and we wonder how ever to explain—all they now mourn is useless. Our homage belongs only to the beat of the blood. Like a pack of hounds, our bodies hold hope in the pulse they gladly make.

We cannot bear it. We do not flinch. We know so little what matter wanted with us all this while—a cog, a stepping stone, a god? The universe opens and opens. We have no way back.

Carole Ten Brink, 841 McEachran, Outremont, Montreal, Quebec H2V3C9.



Pressure

THE POWER OF CULTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVILIZATION (THE CASE OF VIET NAM)

Hoang Ngoc Hien, Nguyen Du School for Creative Writers, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

The distinction between the notion of "culture" and that of "civilization" is not a theoretical sophistication. The development of our society bears this out. We can posit that "civilization" represents the social, political, economic and other institutions and mechanisms established to guarantee the order and the stability of social life, and that "culture" is the total of philosophical, ethical, religious, aesthetic and other ideas that rise up from the spiritual life of the society. This life is much richer and these ideas are much more stable than the institutions of civilization which rule society for their day and pass. In this way, the socialist civilization, or more exactly, the civilization system of the "socialist community" of which our nation was a part, is in grave crisis. A number of institutions are crumbling. Several crucial ones have completely decayed. In the civilization of our own country many institutions have proven to be out of date and unsustainable under the *reformative trend*: the system of work-point collective farms, ticket and coupon, two-price commerce and all the features of the dominant administrative/command system which penetrate into every field, including the fields of culture and ideology. To understand properly the crisis of socialist civilization, it should be known that at present Western civilization (which has been regarded as opposite to ours) is in an equally grave crisis. In the famous *The Third Wave* by Alvin Toffler, an American social thinker, the crisis of Western civilization ("the Second Wave") is briefly evaluated: "There is a sick odor in the air. It is the smell of a dying Second Wave civilization."¹ We are in a crisis of global civilization. Recognizing that, we can dispell the illusion of escaping the socialist civilization crisis by joining that of Western civilization, as many people wish to do. Culture, which due to its long deep root in history, has always proved more lasting than the institutions of civilization, which arise from practice and therefore are unstable and transient, is not necessarily involved in the decay of civilization. Culture, with its accumulation of historical constants, with its necessarily broad view covering the past, the present and the future, can be sustained through the crisis if we can propose basic ideas enabling us to draw lessons from the decay of old-fashioned institutions of civilization, forming the prospect of a better-civilized society to meet peoples' aspirations for freedom and their desire for happiness. In the present situation no task is more important and more urgent for cultural circles and culturalists than that of proposing such basic ideas.

The principle of "reducibility of the three religions to the same and one source" (*tam giao dong nguyen*) is an ancient tradition in our cultural history. "The national ideological tradition sees the conciliation and cohabita-

tion of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism as the basis of existence"² writes professor Hue Chi. The principle of "reducibility to the same source" can be considered an essential feature of the spirit of the national culture. In the house of the patriot Phan Boi Chau at Ben Ngu (Hue) the portraits of Confucius, Lenin and Ton Van were seen to be hung side by side³. Isn't this an example of the modern principle of "reducibility to the same source"? As President Ho said "Didn't Confucius, Jesus, Marx, and Ton Dat Tien have things in common? They all endeavored to bring happiness to mankind and welfare to society. If they were still alive and gathered together, I believe they would definitely be in perfect congeniality as good friends. . . I try to be their 'junior disciple'"⁴. In the thought of the "junior disciple", the thinkings of great men representing different religions, philosophies of completely different historical periods and cultures are regarded as "reducible to the same source" due to their "devotion" for the people and society. President Ho's idea of "cultural reducibility to the same source"—if there is such an idea—is based on the "good heart" (*tam*) towards mankind and society and goes beyond the national context. In culture, the principle of "reducibility to the same source" stands higher than the choice between pluralism and monism.

The principle of "reducibility to the same source" is congenial to the spirit of cultural tolerance. This cultural tolerance stands above religious, philosophical, aesthetic and other prejudices. Cultural tolerance has its philosophical base in the "consciousness of the Other" which is the conception of respecting other's differences so that they respect ours (such is the definition of "tolerance" by Leopold Zea, a Mexican philosopher, which he considers to be a "key term" in today's world culture)⁵. Cultural tolerance includes the ability to recognize our particularities and to pay respect to what is distinct but equal to us. In Leopold Zea's view, in diversity of culture the important thing is that peoples are different from one another equally so that they are equal while different.

The more highly developed, the more tolerant a culture will be. In such fields as economy, politics, the military and so on, the boundaries are drawn clearly, sometimes mercilessly. In the field of culture, its very spirit is that of tolerance. Even when the question of a boundary is put forward, faithful to its own spirit, culture considers the boundary with a viewpoint of tolerance. Cultural tolerance is expressed through the view which gives priority to the supreme benefits of national development and social progress: national culture surpasses all class prejudices and receives all the values enriching it. "Proletcult" as well as other left-wing cultural movements lead to harmful consequences due to their omission of cultural tolerance. The more tolerant the culture is, the greater it is. In recent years, our culture has accepted with the spirit of tolerance the achievements of New Poetry, *Tu Luc Van Doan* (Own Strength Literary Group) and several valuable works from world culture (which were previously prohibited). This should be considered as a sign of the development of our culture. In the process of social progress, social, economic, political conflicts

and contradictions are unavoidable. Culture with its tolerant spirit has a great power to contribute towards strengthening the unification of the nation and consolidating peoples.

To construct the economy, every potential (technical and capital) of the nation must be mobilized. The spirit of enterprise, a keen interest in every economic process must be encouraged from every class and every individual in the society. In the two great recent resistance wars, the policy of uniting the whole people was the decisive factor in our success. In today's construction of the nation, the strength of the united people needs to be promoted more than ever before. A characteristic of our recent history is the military wars which lasted for decades and whose inevitable and highly fierce splits undeniably left smears and complexes in the minds of the many walks of society, especially of those who—due to various circumstances—were connected with the opposite government and its military. In such a situation, culture, whose nature is tolerance, plays a very important role in consolidating the whole people and in a larger focus, the whole Vietnamese community, including millions of overseas Vietnamese. The Secretary General Do Muoi in his answer to the General Editor of *Dai Doan Ket* (November 6th, 1992) said: "...Overseas Vietnamese are an unseparable part of the Vietnamese community. A number of people who bear foreign nationality are still closely attached to their birth-place. More and more overseas Vietnamese are successful, some promise great talent, in fields of science and modern technology, literature, arts, business management. In the schools in the countries where they live, many children of overseas Vietnamese or of Vietnamese origin excel in studies. Our people are proud to have outstanding offspring in any corner of the world. . ." (*Dai Doan Ket*, n.46, 1992). Besides, it is also necessary to acknowledge the complexes caused by "left-wing" errors of the class struggle and the social reform that remain deep in the souls of many people in our regime. To implement the said task, culture itself must extend its tolerance. For example, a fairer evaluation of the cultural achievements of the South in the former period (before 1975), and a more sincere, more proper concern with the cultural achievements in all fields of overseas Vietnamese will not only enrich our own culture but also help eliminate complexes and prejudices in the minds of millions of people. Only when culture is tolerant can it take charge of gathering all organizations, all individuals and all talents in and outside of the country to practice our lofty goal: "to make the people rich, the country powerful, to protect the independent sovereignty and the united territory." (see the Do Muoi interview) At present, without tolerance how can we eliminate hatreds within the Vietnamese community?⁶

Only with a generous spirit can we understand the cultures of different peoples of other beliefs and religions. Culture may have a great influence on harmony among people. On the other hand, tolerance creates an openness in communication with foreigners (overseas Vietnamese included) of the cultures alien to us. Without

cultural openness, economic openness can hardly be reached.

During the French colonial period, a dominant issue in cultural exchange between the two countries was the struggle between the French policy of cultural enslavement and the patriots' wish to protect the national culture. This struggle may easily be generalized as one between French and Vietnamese culture. But in fact, the main relation between the two cultures during the French colonial period is a "symbiosis." It is this cultural symbiosis that is the source of prodigious cultural achievements during this period. What is cultural "symbiosis"? Nguyen Quan writes, "In cultural exchange, together with econo-social and techno-scientific adaptation, symbiosis is a new feature and a reality of the cultural world. Bringing one's nation to an opposition to the world with a sense of self-defense merely expresses one's backwardness although it is necessary for undeveloped countries in some way; the new form of exchange is symbiosis, not simply whether to accept or not. There will be no more be *alien* and *distinctive* nationalities as during colonial times. Refusing cultural symbiosis and only looking for techno-scientific achievements and economic adaptations is illusory and this will turn national culture into a commonplace commodity for tourists. Nationality is original only when it is a part of the symbiotically organic whole of the world culture" (extracted from the interview)⁷ In cultural symbiosis, infantile errors are inevitable. The achievements of the symbiosis are created by talented individuals. Indifferent people only produce shallow mimicry, commonplace copies from the symbiosis. These sometimes proliferate in the cultural environment, causing serious prejudices to foreign culture. For talented persons (who are difficult to find), the chance outcome of sudden creations is unpredictable. Who could predict the accelerated formation of Vietnamese modern prose in the 1930's? Who could predict the birth of the exquisite Lemur long dress? No one.

And, in the cultural exchange of present day, with much more favorable conditions, what will arise from the cultural symbiosis to enrich the national culture, no one can predict.

The creative quality of cultural symbiosis consists in the ability to thoroughly acquire the exotic culture of creative persons (naturally, an understanding of national culture is indispensable). From 1945 till now, cultural exchange—in rather bustling periods—has not yielded the expected results. Is this for the reason that talented people have not been able to be in contact with and thus learn from the cultural foreign elite as before 1945? Is it because the mistaken mass principles created a net which only let second-rate and third-rate works of foreign culture be introduced to the mass?

Cultural symbiosis is congenial to cultural mediation. Our traditional culture was able to mediate between Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Since the XVII century, contact with western world introduced into the cultural and ideological life of our people Christianity, western democratic ideology (of which the Tam *dan*⁸ doctrine of Ton Trung Son is an Eastern version; so far the importance and the profound influence of this doctrine

have not been evaluated properly) and the western scientific mind (in which modern humane sciences and modern methods of approaching mankind and society must be mentioned), and finally Marxism which has had a great impact over a half of this century. Generally speaking, religious, philosophical, political doctrines adopted by our culture are ideo-cultural formations. These formations, with their exotic origins, whose durable and extensive existence in the socio-cultural life of our people proves that they have been digested, have made adaptations and have experienced the acculturation process, have been nationalized and popularized and received human experience and wisdom from folk culture and from the good sense of many generations of "natives" in the course of history. In answer to an interview Doctor Nguyen Khac Vien touched upon a task put forward in modern cultural development, "to integrate the ideo-cultural formations shaping our cultural history, first Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and finally Marxism". Any ideo-cultural formation has its "essential human source", comprising the ideal of humanism, humane emotions and the experience of self-improvement (in self-understanding and self-control). The mediation function of culture is in the first place the mediation of the "essential human sources." The symbiosis of culture is first that of "essential human sources". The "reducibility" of ideo-cultural formations "to the same and one source" consists in reduction to the common "human source". As a result of the scientific characteristics and democratic spirit of Marxism, Marxist humanism has great importance in our modern culture. This humanism must be conciliated with other "essential human sources" to be able to penetrate in to the masses. As for the experience of self-improvement, the "criticism and self-criticism" of the Vietnamese Marxists will be much more thorough and profound if there is an acquisition of wise Confucian "self-improving" experience, Taoist, Buddhist, and Christian spiritual meditation, and, it is impossible not to mention here, the achievements of modern psychological sciences, the study of psycho-analysis, for example. Confucianism and Marxist doctrine are two especially highly adaptable ideo-cultural formations. They are specialized in the fields of *te gia* (settling the family), *tri quoc* (running the country) and *binh thien ha* (pacifying the world). We, therefore, can draw precious human experience from the study of colossal institutions and mechanisms established for the purpose of "settling, running and pacifying". On the whole, the mediation of "essential human sources" will build the foundation for the criticism of formalism and dogmatism in "growing alive with the doctrines", inadequacies and delusions in "propagating doctrines", and the bureaucratism always combined with ambitions of power in "practicing doctrines". It is these tendencies which had damaged and are damaging the national culture. Even in science, the seriously negative signs of formalism and dogmatism in thinking, and bureaucratism in scientific institutions are being reflected.

What is the goal to guide the conciliation of ideo-cultural formations? First, it is the ideal of "the indepen-

dence of the nation, the freedom of the people and the welfare of the countrymen."

The idea of "Independence, Freedom, Welfare" has been advocated since the initial time of the Republic. After nearly half a century of constructing and protecting the country, facing the crisis of socialist theories, in order to determine for ourselves a viewpoint of socialism, there is no other way than to come back to this great ideal.

To win *independence* for the nation is to unchain the foreign yoke which is an unfair above-beneath dependence, also called vertical dependence. On the other hand, "independence" does not mean to separate from the horizontal *interdependence* between nations and world-regions.

Once the independence of a nation is threatened, "national independence" is the great cause. In the last two wars, millions of people were ready to sacrifice their own welfare and personal freedom for an independent nation. The person who proclaimed "Nothing is more precious than independence and happiness" is also the one who reminded us that "Independence is meaningless if people have no freedom and happiness" (Ho Chi Minh). Independence is the first vital condition for freedom and welfare but is not the final aim. Our people have won independence, the horizon of Freedom. Happiness is ahead. Mankind's desire for freedom and aspiration toward happiness is unlimited.

During our nation's struggle for Independence and Freedom, the freedom of the whole national community was put above everything. The idea of "people's rights of freedom" emphasizes *freedom of individuals*. Aiming at a future society Marx brought up an immortal principle, "the free development of each man is the condition for that of every man." (For adepts of "collectivism", the principle would be more logical if inverted.) Naturally, "solidarity in the free development of everyone" is necessary. Is it true that the priority of "the free development of each man" is emphasized in this principle?

Hanh phuc means *welfare* and *happiness*. Human happiness consists in the free development of personality (personality, in its broad sense, consisting of all the human capacities in every man). According to Nam Cao's expression, it is "the utmost development of capabilities of mankind inherent in every man."⁹ Personality developed freely is also called "free individuality" (Marx). The tragedy of most working people of the old regime was caused by the everyday struggle to meet urgent needs. People therefore were deprived of any chance to develop."¹⁰ People were impoverished, they had to struggle relentlessly to meet urgent needs, let alone to find "development" and "happiness." In underdeveloped societies, the social conflict is that between "the minority possessing privileges to develop" and "the majority deprived of any chance to develop". "Food and clothes" are "urgent demands" of man. Nam Cao understood deeply the tragedy of those who have to struggle restlessly all their whole life to win food and clothes: "How cramped, how limited and meaningless life is! Never to dare to look up at a little higher. All efforts are for food and clothes. All wishes, all expectations, the only aims of our life seem to be two meals a day. All wit, all energy, all calculations are

consumed only for it. . . Threatened with death by hunger all the time, scheming incessantly not to be starved. . ."¹¹ When chronic famine haunts permanently the minds of people, happiness first means "food and clothes." The key to happiness is "free individuality", "the utmost development of mankind's capabilities inherent in every man". The "free development of personality" is a progressive form of happiness. The tragedy of a freely developed personality is sometimes more worthy than the foolish cheer of an undeveloped personality. Our renovation obtains its first achievements: we may overcome the period of "the ration of rice".¹²

"Free individuality" is not at all a luxury for man's happiness. The development and practice of human abilities means to realize acquired abilities, to produce practical results. Simply speaking, they are the activities of "learning a career" (*hoc vo*) and "using it" (*dung vo*). The two fields of activities are closely linked. No "knowing a career" or no environment "to use it" both cause difficulties in developing a personality. A proper strategy for the normal development of man must take up two things: to create subjective and objective favorable conditions for study and the acquisition of skills, and to create diverse, abundant environments for activities for people of various characters to apply and display their talents. In our present society, many cases of bad morals, in fact, spring from difficulties and impasses in the development of personality: either the abilities do not keep up with new tasks or they are not used.

Studying man's fate in pre-capitalist society Marx commented on this level of social development "Small-scale production" is the indispensable condition for developing social capacity and free individuality of laborers. *It can only be attained through prosperity*, expressed all its capacity, achieved in its suitable classical form where workers have the freedom to own their own working conditions, where farmers have the right to own the land on which they are working, where artisans use their own tools with outstanding skill (tempering bricks from beneath)."¹³ At the level of the economic development in our present society, *small-scale production still prevails*. The important thing for people's happiness is to find *diverse forms of ownership and institutions of possession* to promote to the utmost the development of the personality of laborers of diverse ages, careers and different places of residence.

The development of a worker's personality corresponds to the laws of ownership. Activeness, independence, and strong-will—features often found in a *righteous personality*—are related to a free labor status, i.e. laborers with private property and so masters of their living and working conditions. Why in the plays of Ibsen, a Norwegian writer, is the petty bourgeoisie seen as belonging to a world in which people are strong-willed, active and act independently? F. Engels points to its deep origin: "Norwegian farmers have never been serfs. The Norwegian petty bourgeois is the child of free farmers and therefore is a righteous man."¹⁴ Free farmers are laborers who have private possessions and serfs are farmers deprived of all possessions (including possession of their own body). The status of ownership of laborers, thus,

leaves traces in the personality of their offspring. In Vietnamese society before the revolution middle peasants were free individuals, and righteous personalities are often found in this social stratum. As a matter of fact they also bore the oppression of landlords, village tyrants, mandarins and imperialists but, compared to landlords who had private possessions but no labor and were deprived by a parasitic life and on the other hand to "poor peasants" (*ban nong*), "farm hands" (*co nong*) who had labor but no possessions, middle peasants (*trung nong*) had the most favorable conditions to develop free individuality and to achieve righteous personality.

The conciliation of ideo-cultural formations must aim at great goals. "Independence -Freedom—Happiness" are political goals. Determining philosophical goals is the task of philosophers. I can nominate examples: *security* and the *enduring continuity of human life*. These goals have been determined by Leslie A. White, an American philosopher, as the final aim of culture itself.

Among man's demands for security, the least is security in social activities (that guarantees orderly working conditions) and the most is security for the soul. In fact, the security in social activities is extremely important, this is the "infrastructure" of civilized life. Mutual relations between culture and law, culture and discipline, culture and order and social security and so on must be acknowledged. Culture is internal freedom. Laws and other disciplines are external preventions. Culture consists of the *ultimate* requirements of morals. Laws are limited with *minimum* moral requirements. Order and discipline can be established or consolidated in a short time but establishing culture for each individual and for the society requires a long time, even generations. The demands for security in soul are closely related to religious life and beliefs (especially in agricultural civilizations). Demands for security in the soul makes man realize more deeply the moral life. Therefore, in some way, religions and beliefs build moral consciousness. However, taking advantage or abusing worship causes disorder and dissipation in social life and therefore is opposed to final cultural ends. Going in for religion mongering, how can man obtain security for the soul when to incite religious followers to be fanatic is to violate social security? Culture's final end cannot be mediated with the use of the name of "cultural tolerance" to propagate ideas harmful to the peace and healthy spiritual life of the society.

The demand of "enduring continuity" in life has its root in the instinct to maintain the human race. The demand is reflected at many levels: family, nation, mankind and others. The simplest and most popular demand is that of maintaining the life of the family, the lineage, while the higher degree is the concern for the family's reputation. Together with environmental pollution, ecological imbalance and destructive war on a global scale, man's consciousness of protecting the race has increased.

Man has a need to understand and master the *link between the present and the past and the future* both for oneself and for one's community. The Russian

culturalist, S. Erasov, considers this link as a special "dimension" which culture brings out forth man (see B.S. Erasov. *Eastern Culture, Religion and Civilization*, Russian version, 1990, pg. 5). Occult sciences, physiognomy and astrology have a great attraction because they meet (though delusively) the above-mentioned demand. Religion and sacred beliefs can profoundly satisfy the need to master the link between the present, the past and the future in terms of individual destiny. The cultural meaning of the worship of ancestry is that through worshipping and praying one can feel a deep connection between the existence of one's ancestry (who represent the past) and the health and well-being of oneself and one's family in the present and the future. It is possible to make arrangements about one's present and future by practical calculation. However, the arrangement is connected with the past's "sacredness" such as ancestors' graves and remains (the symbol of the origin). It bears a cultural meaning. Belief phenomenon should be considered from the perspective of culture. A simplistic "materialist" viewpoint often appears to be superficial.

The development of our national culture can not resist the reception of new values, the value of Western culture and modern world culture. *Modernization* is an essential factor of renovation. Renovation is the reception of new values and modern values. To receive and adopt new cultural values appropriately, national identity must be reckoned with. By ignoring national identity, acculturation will take place superficially, mechanically, distortedly, vulgarly and without durable achievement.

For thousands of years, the culture of our nation has been part of Eastern culture. That is why when considering the identity of our national culture, we can not ignore our Eastern identity. Russia—geographically as well as historically—is extremely close to the West. In reform, however, many Russian culturalists paid close attention to the matter of Russian identity: is it Western or Eastern, closer to the West or to the East? The poet Brodski surmised, "Russia is often considered as European mixed with Asian, but in fact it must be called Asian mixed with European". He affirmed that Western culture and Eastern culture are completely different. "The West produces the culture of individuality, therefore each of its achievements is the individual achievement, the result of searching and also possibly painful desperation, solitude. That is what makes you strive, to step ahead towards the infinite. In Russia, in particular, in the East, in general, that is rare." (see "West and East—Similarity and Difference", Van Nghe, June 15th, 1991) The philosopher Alexandre Zinoviev vehemently warned that the "Western model" only fits Western culture and society (see "A Western model for Russia?" *Van Nghe*, July 20th, 1991). The writer Vladimir Maksimov in his speech in the television proposed "Russia should regard itself a part of the East." (All three culturalists lived in exile for a long time, but yet they were unable to understand the West.)

The notion of "individual dignity" as well as the idea of democracy are the essential values of the modern culture of mankind which our reforming society must put to the question of reception and acquisition—a real and profound acquisition. Yet Eastern identity does not allow

us to put forward the question exactly the same as one would in the West, to make a facsimile of the West. Traditional Eastern culture emphasizes "concord" (*hoa*) and "community" (*cong*) (Ha Van Tan). Therefore in our cultural atmosphere, the affirmation of "personal dignity" and "personal distinctions" must be in tune with "concord", and unity with the community as well as the recognition of the "community" views and interests. "To be in concord with the common without identification with it" (*Hoa nhi bat dong*) that is the way to affirm individual dignity in a society which bears a clear mark of the Eastern cultural tradition. "To be in concord without identification with the common" does not mean compromise. In contrast, there is the view of the philosophy of "mean person" (*tieu nhan*): "identification with the common but not concord with it" (*dong nhi bat hoa*) (Confucius). Buddhism (the largest religion in the East and in our country) has an extremely profound viewpoint about the individual, very different from that of the West. Buddhism appreciates absolutely the potential to be won over to ideals of individual. "Look into yourself, you are Buddha yourself." Buddhism "does not concede any power for the truth but man's intuition is powerful for oneself"¹⁵ Buddhism realized to the fullest the humiliation of "egoism" "Out of infatuation, one thinks one can struggle for egoistic benefit and that very deviated energy causes unhappiness"¹⁶. The viewpoint of Buddhism in regard to each person's position in this immense life brings about the philosophical depth of the viewpoint of individual. "In each individual, nothing is immortal and permanent. . . we are not the master if life is transmitted into us as the lamp is not the master of the power which lights it."¹⁷

Democratic ideology includes the consciousness of civil rights and human rights. Western culture takes the rights of man seriously while Eastern culture places importance on the duties of man. In the Western world, the unilateral demand for human rights can be acceptable. The process of democratization in our society will sooner or later improve the consciousness of the rights of man. However, the matter will be put forward in a different way from the West: the consciousness of rights must go together with the consciousness of duty. This fits the Eastern cultural tradition better and is not in conflict with common sense in general. The important political documents of the 10th high-ranking conference of the Non-Allied Movement which was held at the beginning of September, 1992, was imbued with the wise ideology of Eastern culture. Particularly, in regard to human rights the top leaders of governments or states emphasize that "the principle provisions in the statement about human rights reflect two proportional aspects: on the one hand to respect the essential freedom of the individual while on the other hand to stipulate the duties of individuals toward the government. Such a proportion is important because the lack of it may lead to the denial of the rights of the community as a whole and lead to instability, especially in developing countries" (extracting from "Non allied countries declare. . .", *Nhan Dan*, September 26th, 1992, pg. 2). To nationalize the concept of "human rights" (*nhan quyen*) means to attach it to the concept of "human

duties" (*nhan nghia*) (likewise, to modernize the concept *nhan nghia* ("human duties") is to attach it to the concept "*nhan quyen*" (human rights). The term *nhan nghia* in traditional meaning (used by Nguyen Trai) means "humanity or benevolence" (*nhan*) and "righteousness" (*nghia*). "*Nhan nghia*" used in this context is a homonym and means "human duties" in opposition to "*nhan quyen*" which means "human rights".

"Each people contacts God directly." If God is understood as an absolute truth, this saying has a deep meaning: each nation must utilize its own historical experience to understand the truth of great notions (without excluding the lessons drawn on its own from world history). Then, what is direct contact with "God"? That is the case of dependence on the notions of other peoples. "Freedom", "democracy", "human rights", and "personal dignity" are universal notions. However, in the culture of each people, these notions have distinctive features. Can we count the patriarchal nuance in the democratic concept in our society? The ideology of patriarchy has dominated our society for a long time. This ideology has gradually showed its anti-democratic aspect: it does not concede the rights of the individual. On the other hand, the patriarchal relation has its warm poetic quality and traditional ethical basis. Backward manifestations of the patriarchal ideology must be criticized. Nevertheless in our society, in certain socio-cultural environments, the fact that democracy contains this patriarchal poetic quality and traditional moral feelings seems quite natural. To treat the matters of democracy in our society (in principle an agricultural civilization) on the basis of "democratic" nations of western developed societies (which have gone through a few centuries of civil society) is to make an error in methodology: to relate "indirectly" to God.

National identity is not as easy to understand as we think. It contains mysteries. Eastern identity has mysterious aspects which have become legendary. However, "mysterious" does not mean "mystical". To speak of Eastern identity is to speak of a stance from which to talk of the Western world, a basis on which to convert and to adapt to what should be received from the West. In the increasing *interdependency* between the nations and regions of the world, the natural trend is that the East and the West move closer together. In such global circumstances, "to act as though victimized by the West and deny the West" is out of date. The East's thousands of years of immobility cannot last forever. The power of Japan today and the appearance of new Asian "dragons" show us the direction of Eastern movement. Obviously, Japan and other Asian "dragons" have received—apart from progressive science and technology—classical western "socio-economic forms" from the West, which sprang from the ancient cities of Greece where the private-ownership system, private rights, democratic institutions and government, civil society and market economy appeared early. These factors determined the formation of western classical socio-economic forms. Through historical changes from ancient to modern times, they have proved to be greatly and durably dynamic. Marx distinguished between the Ancient (Greek) and the Asian

mode of production (where the priority belonged to the State mode of production and the administrative/command structure which persistently stifled the development of the factors that produced the above-mentioned dynamism of Western society). The bifurcation of the trend of dynamic history originating from Ancient Greece and the trend of underdeveloped history in the Asian mode of production is a historical basis contributing to the opposition between East and West and partly explaining the Eastern mysteries. The noticeable thing is the fact that in trying to understand the East now, one can not help using the apparatus of Western notions. In this century, in our country, there are no real orientalists who do not master the study of the West. The fact that the Western world is more and more interested in the East may create an illusion of the superiority of Eastern mysteries. This illusion will irrevocably lead to the state of inadequate knowledge of both the East and the West.

A simplistic conception about West-East relations would place the *nationality* and the *modernity* of the culture we are building in metaphysical opposition. Such an opposition results from an unilateral conception of modernity reducing it to rationalism (appropriated from modern Western culture), considering it as a result only of modernization. Indeed Western arts have a very developed and powerful basis in rationalism. It is the theoretical basis of every art. In addition to that, rationalism (under the form of ingenious engines and rational organization of work) penetrate more and more deeply and widely in all domains of the production, publicization and consumption of the art product. It is just this rationalism that testifies to the enormous effects of Western arts. However, rationalism and rationalization are only part of modernity. On the basis of capital studies of the history of modernity in Western civilizations, Alain Touraine, an eminent French cultural philosopher puts forward a sound statement: "rationalization and subjectivization are two opposite and complementary faces of modernity."¹⁸

The process of subjectivization is related to the development of creating individuals and creating group subjects and at last to the development of the nation's subject. And so the problem of nationality issues into the problem of the development of the nation's subject. This problem itself is situated in the whole process related to the development of individuals and the group's subject. Hence it is obvious that it is illogical to oppose modernity to nationality. Modernity—in its full meaning—implies the process of subjectivization, and the subject of the nation is not outside this process. In the context of the nation invaded and subjugated by foreigners the task of preservation of the national identity—as a rule—is emphasized. However, the positive form of preserving the national identity is to develop and enrich it. The development of the nation's subject is closely related to the development of the subject of the individuals and creative groups (schools of literature and art). The individual nature of national arts is created by none but the artists of the nation. And therefore the warranty of the rights to freedom of creation for the artists and schools of art is a

condition sine qua non for the development of the enrichment of the national nature in arts.

If modernity results from the combination of the two processes of rationalization and of subjectivization, nationality is only a partial problem of modernity. For just elucidation of the problems of nationality we have to bear in mind the combination of the two processes elaborating modernity. A process of subjectivization turning away from rationalism and cut off from the process of rationalization amounts to getting bogged down in narcissism, in pecking at and brooding over national identity. Infatuation with national identity sometimes results from a low standard of rationalism.

Modernity is commonly conceived as a product of modernization. Indeed modernization only acts upon the process of rationalization, the reinforcement of rationalism—it is only one face of modernity. Moreover, the process of rationalization developing unilaterally, cut off from the process of subjectivization, can bring out a disastrous consequence, that is, to strip reason from the subject, hence reason and the subject bearing reason are changed into instrument. At the worst, the instrument is used to serve the cruel power of oligarchy (economic, financial, political, militarist, whatever). This consequence is called by Alain Touraine “instrumental rationalism”. The more rationalism is developed, the more instruments (including organizational instrument) are ingenious. But the strength, the grandeur of man consists not only in the instruments he masters, it consists further in the initial capability to define relevant aims and purposes in life. Instrumental rationalism strips from man this sense of initiative, transforming the reason of man and man himself into instrument. In Eastern countries, including our own, some philosophers raise their voice to warn about the excessive influence of Western rationalism. What deserves criticism in Western rationalism is instrumental rationalism. However, every totalitarian system produces instrumental rationalism, no matter if it is Western or Eastern. Moreover, criticizing instrumental rationalism we have to bear in mind that in Vietnamese culture rationalism is not superabundant.

Discussing the construction of a modern culture, the question of “individualism” in modern culture can not be left untouched. The “individualism” here is not related to the term “individualism” in daily use, which belongs to the ethical category. It means the consciousness of the individual in regard to his own personality and self, especially it expresses the confidence of the individual in the “value of his opinion.” The history of the appearance of “individualism” in modern culture—according to a familiar scheme—has often been presented as a process of “accumulating” the factors of individualization and through the “Romantic Revolution” leading to the “individualism of modern culture”. In the history of our national culture, the “accumulation of the individualization factors” through medieval times and modern times is reflected most clearly in the works by eminent figures: Nguyen Trai (1380-1442), Nguyen Du (1766-1820), Ho Xuan Huong (approximately during the last decades of XVIII century and the first decades of XIXth century), Cao

Ba Quat (1808-1855), Tu Xuong (1870-1907), Tan Da (1888-1939) and others. “The Romantic Revolution” took place during the period 1930-1945 with the New Poetry Movement and the novels of the Tu Duc Literary Group. It is necessary to reckon the prose works of Vu Trong Phung, Nguyen Tuan, and their companions, whose ebullient and abundant creativity makes us suspect all “labels” dubbed to them. The individualism of modern culture came into existence during this period, absorbing in the initiatives of a generation of writers who were later called “prewar”. Also in this period, the first authors in modern Vietnamese painting and music appeared: Nguyen Phan Chanh, Nguyen Gia Tri, To Ngoc Van, Dang The Phong, Van Cao and others. “Cultural” individualism (we use this term to distinguish it from “ethical” individualism) can be recognized as the source of the abundance in individual styles, in aesthetical and ideological searchings during this period. “Cultural” individualism is a step forward in the consciousness of Vietnamese culture, a new level obtained by Vietnamese culture on the way toward modernization, after nearly a century of symbiosis with French culture, in other words with Western culture (we do not say European culture because during the following historical period, Vietnamese culture contacted the culture of Eastern Europe and absorbed a very different impact).

The early years of the revolution and the war of resistance in conjunction with the irresistible growth of public movements contributed to the proliferation and the fiery impact of revolutionary collectivist ideology. In such circumstances, the denial of “ethical” individualism led to the suspicion of and the hesitation over “cultural” individualism. This is quite understandable. There should have been some reconsideration given to the role of “cultural” individualism, to examine the drawbacks of its nature under the colonial circumstances, fairly evaluating its progress in terms of world history and simultaneously elevating it in order to keep pace with the spirit of the August Revolution, with the ideological tide of the whole people in the revolution and war of resistance. Regrettably the development of culture in the 50s and 60s did not happen in that way. There were, in fact, leaps and enormous achievements in “public” cultural movements: the anti-illiteracy campaign, compulsory education, public health care, new ways of living and more, but the dimension of “cultural” individualism was lacking. The normal development of the individual was restricted unnaturally, individual personality and individuality were not properly paid attention to, individual “belief” in “the values of one’s own opinions” was not really respected. The big tragedy for writers and intellectuals of *Nhan van giai pham* (“Literary humanists”, most of whom came of age during the French colonial times, experiencing Western “cultural” individualism) was the tragedy of an individual who put “great confidence” in the value of his own opinions in a situation of an extremist collectivism in which “ethical” individualism had not been distinguished. From the experience of the cost of eliminating the dimension of “cultural” individualism in building the culture of that period, the worthy lesson for preparing integration into the modern cultural world in the next

period is that of "By accepting the individual in our own home, in our own country, we will respect our neighbors and will enjoy their respect." (We borrow the Arabian writer's words in his speech on the demeanor of each people which enters the new world era, see *UNESCO Courier*, November, 1990.) Individual opinions often cause "troubles" for the decision-making of the collective (especially for immature collective). Nevertheless, the consequences of trying to control people voicing their own opinions will be disastrous. Pasternak wrote, "the main disaster, the origin of future evils, is the loss of confidence in the value of one's opinions: hackneyed words will gradually dominate." (excerpt from Borix Pasternak's *Life and works*. Ho Chi Minh City Publishing House, 1988, pg 44)

The great positive effect of "cultural" individualism is to promote the strong point and the activity of the subject, creating inspirations of initiative and creativity. On the other hand, extremist individualism leads the individual to indifference to community life. Once the link with the community is cut off, the absence of feeling for the community causes the death of the essential human feelings: love, friendship, responsibility, compassion, considerateness, attachment to people around, and so on. The individual falls into solitude, a tragic circumstance of modern Western society. "Yet today," Toffler writes, "the institutions on which community depends are crumbling in all the techno-societies. The result is a spreading plague of loneliness." (op. cit. p. 367).

Culture makes life *meaningful*. It brings spiritual meaning to the life experiences of man. Owing to culture, "all that I beheld respired with inward meaning." (Wordsworth). Spiritual meaning arises from the reaction of one's consciousness to life experiences. In an old story about three stone-cutters, when asked, "What do you do?", the first worker said, "I cut stones"; "I earn a living," the second answered; and the third said, "I'm building a church." For the first one "cutting stone" simply means "cutting stone" and does not mean anything else. He worked as a machine, perhaps he was just "a speaking tool." For the second, cutting stone means "earning a living." To work simply to win bread is not really a spiritual endeavor. For the third worker, cutting stone had a spiritual meaning: "building the church." The third worker is a cultural one.

Among the spiritual meanings brought to life by culture, the meaning of life (or "cause of life") is the most important. It is the meaning of all meanings, the answer to all questions. What is life for? This question is in no way simple. Even if the third worker answered, "We live to build the church," we can put the question, "What's that church for?" Culture is in serious crisis when man feels his life is meaningless.

The meaning of life arises from the relation between the *individual and the community*.¹⁹

The development of the market economy and freedom in business and the extension of private and individual economic sectors produces the activity of individuals and society, adding considerably to the development of the spirit of enterprise and the abilities of enterprise, in all people. These are the great agents of the develop-

ment of civilization. Under the domination of the administrative/command system, the elimination of private ownership and the control of individual possession, the majority could easily be turned into factory-bred chickens. The spirit of enterprise and the abilities of enterprise is paralyzed. In reform, new conflicts arise. Obviously, social life is becoming more and more "intelligent". Society and man are becoming more and more dynamic. There are, however the "reverse sides" that are worth paying attention to. Objectionable scenes of life are exposed. Even in the working class, the nature of living is more and more down-to-earth. People pay almost no attention to anything but earning a living and making a fortune. Earning a living is important. Nguyen Du did not make light of it. But: together with the worry about "earning a living", the great poet also was beset with his noble vows (his tragedy was double: "both earning a living and noble vows are gloomy, of no prospects"). Anyway the purpose of living must be put higher than simply earning one's living. Not a small number of people who have made a fortune still feel their lives are empty. With the present momentum, more and more people have a more and more practical purpose of living. The second stone-cutter would be typical of the culture of our society. "Building the church" is the noble purpose of the third worker. The purpose of living is spiritually meaningful only when combined with the noble vows. Previously, noble vows were tempered in the cause of emancipating the country. In peaceful times, noble vows require intellectual and moral values. Today, to make a fortune for oneself, it needs only "tricks" and "luck". To develop the national economy and create more opportunities of working and living for people, to impact on the development of culture and civilization, there must be heart and energy, talent and knowledge, boldness and patience. Certainly, previously as well as presently, the strength of noble vows lay in patriotism and sentimental attachment to the national community.

People, nation, and humanity are macrocosmic communities. In life, people often contact microcosmic communities: family, school, youth union group, office, enterprise and so on. Human meanings emanate from the relations between individuals and microcosmic communities to bring about plenitude and warmth in individual lives. They satisfy the demand for community which is the most essential human demand. Without them the relation between individual and macrocosmic communities becomes abstract, sometimes to become just rhetorical words. In the present situation of our society, the correlation between the macrocosmic community and the microcosmic one is worth paying attention to. A universal weak point in our cultural activities is that we concentrate on the macrocosmic culture, mainly in words not in deeds, and make light of microcosmic culture. Culture in enterprises, offices, etc. is in a chaos and that of the individual is not at all serious. In the current civilization crisis, lucky individuals who have healthy families and work in good working groups usually do not have their beliefs shattered. Therefore, their adjustment to macrocosmic culture will not be stable if each individual does not care for his own family, his own

office or enterprise. The lack of community emotions, the poverty of human meanings (which are brought to individuals by community relations) is the destiny not only of people with family or unemployed people. Some people who have both family and job also feel *lonely*. Then, what relationship between an individual and the microcosmic community would satisfy the community need for that individual? The individual need for community is not only the need to join the community, but also that of the community worthy to love, respect and find attachment towards. The community just belongs to individuals when "they have sense of belonging to something greater and better than themselves." (Alvin Toffler) This sense produces the pathos of human affection (*trinh*) and responsibility (*nghia*) that links the individual to the community. This pathos of human affection and responsibility pose ethical requirements of *loyalty* and *faithfulness*. *Loyalty* and *faithfulness* are ethical requirements of the same nature. Faithfulness is the ethical requirement reckoned in the relation between individuals and the macrocosmic community (country, people, and so on). Loyalty is required in the relation between the individual and the microcosmic community and other individuals with whom he has direct relations. At the beginning of the construction of the nation, the concentration on establishing *faithfulness* in the relation of individuals with *the people* and *the country* (macrocosmic communities) was of great necessity. Regrettably, this more or less caused the neglect of the requirement of loyalty of the individual toward microcosmic communities and in interpersonal relations. What will social customs and morals be without loyalty among friends, among colleagues, between teachers and pupils, between boss and employers, between sellers and buyers, among contractors and dealers and on and on. Faithfulness and loyalty are traditional ethical values. *Faithfulness* is related in the Confucian *Trung*. *Loyalty* here is generalized from the Confucian *Tin* in relation between friends; people everywhere appreciate a way of living which is full of gratitude, loyalty, mutual affection and responsibility. In the current ethical crisis, the neglect of loyalty is as worrying as the loss of belief. It should be recognized that left-wing rudeness in the class struggle (in the land reform for example) caused more than a little harm to the place of loyalty in social relations and even family relations.

The family is a natural and elementary human community. It is in family life that the need of children to "belong to something that is greater than themselves" is gradually formed and absorbed. In family life, children learn for the first time to esteem loyalty, "affection and responsibility". All the members of the family—the father with his effort to bring up and educate his children and his severity, the mother with her spirit of sacrifice and her gentleness, children with their piety and mutual care—contribute to turn the family into "something better and greater". Each member, including innocent small children with their wonderful inherent development, makes a contribution. The sense of community is developed in those people who directly engage in the activities of study and work. If the factory is just a place where the worker

can earn his living, it can not satisfy the need of workers for community. With the policy that encourages seniority, working for the factory during one's entire life, with the attention the managers pay to workers' lives, with the introduction of family relations and paternalism into relations among workers and employers of the factory, the Japanese encourage precious experience which makes the workers loyal and faithful to the factory.

The tradition of village community is a long and durable one in the history of Vietnamese civilization. From "the mutual affection and sense of responsibility among villagers" (*Tinh lang nghia xom*) an original value of our national identity is formed—that's the feeling of human affection (*Tinh*) mixed with the sense of human responsibility or duty (*nghia*). For the Vietnamese, the concept of human "ties of affection and responsibility" (*tinh nghia*) is closer to them than the Confucian one of "ties of humanity and righteousness" (*nhan nghia*). The feeling of human affection and responsibility is the harmonious combination between affection and responsibility. The relation between lovers is the human affection (or love) relation (*nhan tinh*). The relation between husband and wife is moreover tied by the relation of responsibility or duty (*nhan nghia* or *nhan ngai*) as well. The durability of the Vietnamese family is maintained by the harmony between feelings of affection (*tinh*) and sense of responsibility (*nghia*). Maternal love reinforces the child's benevolence and the traditional power of the father ("patriarchal power") guarantees the serious execution of all duties of his children. Each human philosophy emphasizes an aspect of harmony in the spiritual life of men: the harmony between belief and reason, between intellect and will, between reason and duty, and so on. Is the tradition of "ties of affection and responsibility", the emphasis of the harmony between affection and responsibility, an original feature in the human philosophy of the Vietnamese? In the relation between "affection" and "responsibility", the pole of "responsibility" is more essential and durable than "affection". Thus affection may die but there remains responsibility. The flames of love, of affection may be extinguished, yet the situation is not hopeless if the responsibility relation still remains. In modern life the more free the love (or affection) relation is getting (an inevitable tendency of the age), the more the spiritual life of man needs the durable essence of the "sense of responsibility". People living in modern society are usually very cautious when touching upon "fidelity". Nowadays, the demand for a behavior full of affection and responsibility can be more accepting and thus more flexible. When *responsibility is combined with affection* we have a quite voluntary responsibility different from the spirit of "task" or "duty" that is stipulated by law and other regulations. This is the area of charitable activities and mutual help. The purpose of charitable action is not only to help unfortunate people but also to arouse the affection and responsibility of the charitable activists themselves. A love (or affection) *which is not combined with responsibility* is an empty love and is subject to suspicion. Patriotism is expressed through the sense of responsibility for caring for the welfare of the

country. Loving one's family, one must be responsible for it. "Love the people" must mean caring with the sense of responsibility for the welfare of the nation.

The traditional morality of our people is a "moral responsibility"²⁰ based on "human affection and human responsibility" that is a sense of responsibility affectionately and wittingly caring for the real destiny of men. With revolutionary morality, the sense of civil and social responsibility is present as never before in the people. However infatuated with fanatic revolutionary "convictions" and "credos", "revolutionary" morality turns into "irresponsible" morality—"conviction"²⁴—putting the domination of "revolutionary" convictions and credos over all, ensuring their hegemony at any cost, regardless of fatal consequences. For example, in the movement of agrarian collectivization, the conviction of "collective ownership" was realized at any cost, regardless of impoverishment of cooperative-members muddling on with a tiny daily payment "of 15 cents" or 150 gr of paddy.

To be sure, not all the traditions in the village-community are fair and fine.

In *The Vietnamese Village*, professor Nguyen Hong Phong gives an exhaustive analysis of the inert legacies of the traditional village/community: the mentality of the village/clan, the mentality of the family/clan, the perverse customs generated by the infatuation with worship/feasting, junketing—"junketing is both the means and the aim of meeting" (op. cit. p. 180). The mentality of village-clan and the mentality of family-clan had produced a kind of "supervillage" (*sieu lang*) described by Prof. Ha Van Tan as a picturesque feature of our society's civilization: "In the village, class differentiation often is not so clear, social communities are intermixed, the administrative system is intermingled with blood-relationships, the whole produced compromises. These features rule over the structure of the whole society. We always live in a kind of "super-village". Facing the impact of the foreign culture, the "super-village" usually shrinks to itself passively! It only accepts what is profitable to the existence of itself." (extracted from the interview) In the way things actually work, structures and mechanisms instituted according to the "socialism model" are often modified by the infiltration of the "super-village". The psychology of "super-village" governs tacitly the behavior of a majority of individuals and communities; it is this majority that gradually denatures the standards of the socialist ways of living which they at first followed sincerely. The culprits of corruption, smugglers, and bandits can be seen. The "super-village" which is present everywhere can not be indicated; it becomes invisible. "Super-village" is the most noticeable challenge for political reform and renovation in our society. Reformative tendencies are refracted in the atmosphere of "super-village". However, "super-village" is not an unavoidable fatality. However, "super-village" customs, "super-village" psychology, and "super-village" atmosphere can not be eradicated as easily as we pull down a Wall. This reality must be counted and realized so that patience and full awareness can be achieved during the course of renovation. Tradition is something we must care about, even accept, whether we like it or not.

Good traditions are values. Yet the present value of tradition consists in the purpose for which it is used. The patriarchal relationship may be used to restrict democracy. The "poetry" and the warmth of patriarchal relationships, however, may have an impact which spiritualizes human relations in the working community, creating the loyalty that attaches workers to their community, creating close relations between workers and their managers. The purpose of applying tradition changes the content of tradition once the value of tradition is corresponding to its purpose of usage. The practical use of tradition is more important than its own value.

This age is far different from the previous. Traditional humanism puts great importance on "human affection and responsibility" and regards it as a cultural motivator of human activities, as a cultural demeanor between people, as a cultural atmosphere which can be and should be created in the life of the community.

Modern humanism emphasizes the *free development* of man. The demand of free development is posed for each person and all people.

It is for the free development of human personality, in its broad sense, comprising all human abilities. Mental ability, working ability, the aptitudes for art, social activism, speech and play are human abilities. Moral behavior and love are essential human abilities. We do not put forward the question of choice between the traditional paradigm of *human affection and responsibility* and the modern one of *free development*. We consider "free development" as a new dimension that the development of civilization brings to bear on the personal nature of human affection and responsibility. Our modern humanism is a theory of *emancipation* and *free development of man*. The present-day man of "affection and responsibility" is far different from the one who is only interested in his village neighbors. He also has the need for self-emancipation and free development provided that the process of self-emancipation and free development does not take him away from his roots in human affection and responsibility. Humanism which emphasizes the free development of man can not help heading to the scientific and technological revolution unfolding with "prodigious speed" in these last decades. Modern science and technology multiply thousands of times the human abilities of the one who can master it. On the other hand it makes way for the leaping development of social production, potentially creating favorable conditions of leisure and material bases for the free development of each and every person. Affection and responsibility are cultural motivators. Though these motivators may be highly developed, man can not have great influence on the progress of civilization with empty hands. Modern science and technology is an extremely useful tool for the development of civilization. Moreover, modern science can open new horizons for human affection and responsibility. In traditional society, mere human affection and responsibility are often taken advantage of. With the increase of the role of law and market accounting in social administration, man demands first and foremost impartial accounts. In our society, impartial accounts are

becoming a sign of civilization, provided that they do not kill human affection and responsibility.

Returning to the distinction between "culture" and "civilization" established from the introduction of the essay, we may state that the tradition of "human affection and responsibility" and the other fair traditions are the genius of the village-community culture, and the "supervillage" is the fateful and hereditary burden which the village-community civilization transmits to our contemporary society. The village community culture consists in the religious, philosophical, aesthetical and other ideas risen up from the thousands of years of village-country life, lasting the trial of time so as to become constants of the spiritual life of people. As for the village-community civilization, as in all other civilizations, it is not free of the general law of life, essential commandments of which are: to come into being, to grow up and to die out. The cradle of the Vietnamese village-community civilization is the Red River (Song Hong) civilization produced from "an agricultural economy using "muscular strength of men and animals", rice monoculture, self-sufficient and dependent on nature"²¹. All the great river civilizations in the world are dead. How to represent the ups and downs of the Song Hong Civilization? Is it true that its periods of prosperity coincide with thriving feudal dynasties? Is it true that its decadence is the deep cause of the enslavement of Viet Nam in the last half of the past century? In the period of the French domination, the colonial power maintained the village-community civilization whose special fate was decay. In the monograph about the village-community already referred to, the word *nat bet* (higgledy-piggledy) is repeated several times. This word generalizes the intuition of the author about the decay of the village-community civilization (in our contemporary society where the village-community confusion reigns, there is higgledy-piggledy). After the August Revolution the popular movements of the Revolution and the Resistance blew vitality into the village-community life. At the beginning of the period of socialist transformation, a co-operative system bravely carried out the task of mobilization of the peasant mass to make a total war. But in peace, particularly after the co-operative scale had been enlarged, this showed disastrous defects. What way of development would the Vietnamese country choose? After experimentation with cooperatives, what line and policy would be able to transform the village-community civilization? Besides, is it true that the essential property of civilization is that the essences of all civilizations are not to be changed or transformed? How would the line of *industrialization*, and the line of *modernization* act upon country life? Would they implant new "genes" in the texture of the village-community civilization so as to restore it or would they found the infrastructure, the premises to the formation of another civilization?

Facing the decay of old institutions of civilization, an instinctive reaction is to demolish the institutions remaining. Cultural action must be loftier than the behavior of spontaneous nihilism. An age of crisis bears great deliberations. Patriots among the Vietnamese community are now intensively thinking up and eagerly longing

for ideas that would clarify the vista of a better civilized society and at the same time point out the historical limits of our people and our nation in the cause of building and developing civilization. Otherwise, previous illusions and utopian thinkings would be repeated.

"Wealthy people, powerful nation" (*dan qian, nuoc manh*) refers to civilization "Cheerful people, powerful nation" (*dan vui, nuoc manh*)²² refers to culture. The nation is powerful when people are wealthy and cheerful. The development of civilization creates "wealthy people, powerful nation.". Cultural strength decides "cheerful people, powerful nation."

A more important role of cultural strength, even a real mission, is to impact on a new progressive process in the historical course of our society, the process of "culturalization" of politics (*van hoa hoa chinh tri*), which is one of the main planks of renovation.

This process has regained the deserved position for culture which in economic renewal is going back to the origin for rebirth, which is acquiring essential deliberations of thousands of years of civilization with new human inspirations, new breaths of freedom and new spiritual needs of the age we are living in. Still, this process elevates politics. High politics is cultured politics. In the recent historical period (since the August Revolution in 1945), the main process of the cultural course is the *politicization of culture*. Through different periods it was up and down—edifying, awakening the masses in one period, distorting, impoverishing and harming both culture and politics in another. As a matter of fact, it keeps on happening in the current period. The development of the politicization of culture for the new period promises profundity and harmony. At least, it will not happen mechanically, one-sidedly, superficially, but develop in parallel with the process of the culturalization of politics. The joining together of the two process guarantees spiritual unanimity of the society and the stability of the nation.

Summer 1992-1993

Hoang Ngoc Hien was born July 21, 1930 in Nam Dinh City, 25 kilometers south of Ha Noi in the province of Nam Dinh, Viet Nam. He began his studies at L'Ecole Primaire Superieure au College de Nam Dinh, went on to the College Huynh Thuc Khang, and earned his doctorate in literature at the University of Moscow, 1959-64. His thesis concerned the poems of Mayakovsky. The Russian intellectual and later Soviet exile dissident Siniavsky was the respondent to his dissertation. After returning to Viet Nam, Hien taught at the Teacher's College in Ha Noi and at Vinh. After 1979, he founded the Nguyen Du School of Creative Writing in Ha Noi. He serves as the chief of the department of the theory and the practice of literary genres at Nguyen Du. He is also active as a literary critic. He has written articles to present Nguyen Huy Thiep, Pham Thi Hoai, Bao Ninh, Ta Duy Anh, and others to those who care about fiction in Viet Nam. He is the first to present Western literary theory to Viet Nam, in his Nhap Mon Van Hoc (An Introduction to Literature), by Sylvia Barnet, Morton Berman, and William Burto. Little, Brown and Company.

Boston, 1981). He is a translator of Mayakovsky. His essay on contemporary Vietnamese culture, considered in terms of yin and yang, will appear in a future issue of *Viet Nam Generation*, translated by Nguyen Quoc Vinh of Harvard University.

NOTES

- ¹ Alvin Toffler. *The Third Wave*, Bantam Books, pg. 367.
- ² *Tap chi Van hoc (Literature Magazine)* n.1, 1993, pg. 11.
- ³ According to journalist Quang Dam in his address to a conference.
- ⁴ Tran Dan Tien, *The tales of acting life of President Ho*, translated version in Chinese by Truong Niem Thuc, Tam Lien Publishing House, Shang Hai, June 1949, pg 91. Quoted from *Nhoa giao xua va nay*, N.x.b. Khoa hoc xa hoi Ha noi.1991, pg.227
- ⁵ See UNESCO Courier, November 1990, Interview with Leopold Zea, pg. 9.
- ⁶ The tale of Tam and Cam—which has been bequeathed to successive Vietnamese generations—is inspired by humane feelings, yet its conclusion cannot escape a savage spirit. To satisfy her hatred Tam makes Cam's corpse into paste and serves it to Cam's mother as a meal. It is true that oppression causes hatred. Yet, without the light of civilized thinking, hatred can burst into "uncivilized" revenge. This tale should be taken as a lesson for us about watching for atavism in ourselves, even in the most gentle persons (Tam is inherently a gentle, kind person). Our folk culture has a saying: "Anger and haste hinder good counsel". Anger by itself takes away our wisdom, let alone hatred.
- ⁷ Interview organized by the research group on the theme *A draft of cultural platform for the new period* (Program KX -06) during the last quarter of 1992.
- ⁸ *Tam dan* means *Three people's*. The doctrine of *Tam dan* of Ton Trung Son (1866-1925), an eminent Chinese revolutionary democrat, put forward three mottos: for the people's national independence, the people's freedom, the people's welfare. This motto is taken up by Ho Chi Minh as the motto of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam: *Doc lap* (Independence) *Tu do* (Freedom) *Hanh phuc* (Welfare).
- ⁹ Extract from the conclusion of chapter II of *Communist Manifesto* (C. Marx and F. Engels)
- ¹⁰ Nam Cao (1915-1951), an eminent Vietnamese writer, *Dragging on life*, Ha Noi, 1963, pg 222.
- ¹¹ C. Marx and F. Engels. *Works* (in Russian), vol. 3, pg.4
- ¹² Nam Cao, *Dragging on life*, Ha Noi, 1963, pg 202
- ¹³ The author of this essay came across the phrase "rice ration" in a short story by To Hoai who explains the phrase as follows: "In the old days, employees who had their meals at the employer's could not eat as much as they wish. Some employers pre-determined the "ration": how many bowls employees could have at a meal."
- ¹⁴ C. Marx and F. Engels. *Works* (in Russian), vol.23, pg 771
- ¹⁵ C. Marx and F. Engels. *Works* (in Russian) vol.37, pg 352
- ¹⁶ Extract from Principle 11 in *Twelve principles of Buddhism*, Theoretical essay in *The Buddhism International* (Vietnamese version by Huyen Chan).
- ¹⁷ Extract from Principle 6 (op. cit.)
- ¹⁸ Extract from Principle 3 (op. cit.)
- ¹⁹ See the speech by L.S. Vasilev in *Conference on Civilization in the Third World*. *Vostok.Oriens* magazine (in Russian) March, 1992

²⁰ Alain Touraine, *Critique de la modernité*, Fayard, 1992, p.412

²¹ The culture of Western Europe (of which French culture is typical) has developed on the basis of the Western Roman empire while that of Eastern Europe (of which Russian culture is typical) has developed under the direct influence of Eastern Roman empire (founded in the 4th century A.D.). It was also called Byzantine culture because the territory of Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Roman empire, had the local name Bizance. Byzantine culture bore the features of Eastern despotism. The government of the Byzantine empire was a totalitarian one. The government controlled almost all the administrative and civil activities. "The wage of every workman and the price of every product were fixed by government decree." "To provide for cheap administration of the system, the emperors encouraged competing businessmen and workers to act as informers against each other". "A manufacturer could not choose for himself what quantity or quality of raw materials he would purchase, nor was he permitted to but them directly. He could not determine how much he would produce or under what conditions he would sell the product". The Byzantine empire is described as "the paradise of monopoly, of privilege and of paternalism" (see *Western Civilizations* by Edward McNall Burns, New York, 1963, pg 281). In Western Europe, the church separated and was independent from the government early, the tradition of academic autonomy also came into being early (since the 12th century) whereas in Russia, the Church depended absolutely on the Tsar and not until the 18th century was the first university founded. These factors explain why the democratic tradition in Russian cultural life is weak as compared to Western Europe. The difference between the category of Western European culture and that of Eastern European culture makes clear the impact cultural interaction has had on the evolution and the configuration of our culture during the present century. From the end of last century until 1945, French culture had an all-round, profound, continuous and systematic influence on the whole country (certainly under colonial circumstances). From 1945 to 1954, in liberated regions we reacted to French culture in terms of "determinative give-up" while the occupied regions were still under the influence of French culture. From 1954 to 1975, Russian culture had an important influence in the North, while the influence of French culture was still maintained in the South, in addition to American culture, which affected the style of life strongly but did not have time to cause important reforms in secondary schools and colleges. After 1975, Russian culture was spread widely over the country, especially in the second half of 1980's when perestroika in the Soviet Union produced stirrs in our cultural life. After the fall of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries Russian cultural influence diminished, Western culture influenced us in many aspects, particularly due to our more open diplomatic policy, to the publishing system and to new means of issuance (photocopy, video., and so on). Our national culture faces a new challenge.

²² For the purposes of philosophical and religious meditation, adaptation to human community sometimes does not satisfy the search for purpose of living. Philosophical thinking and religious meditation go further, searching for the purpose of life in concord with the universe, in the integration of Being and Tao.

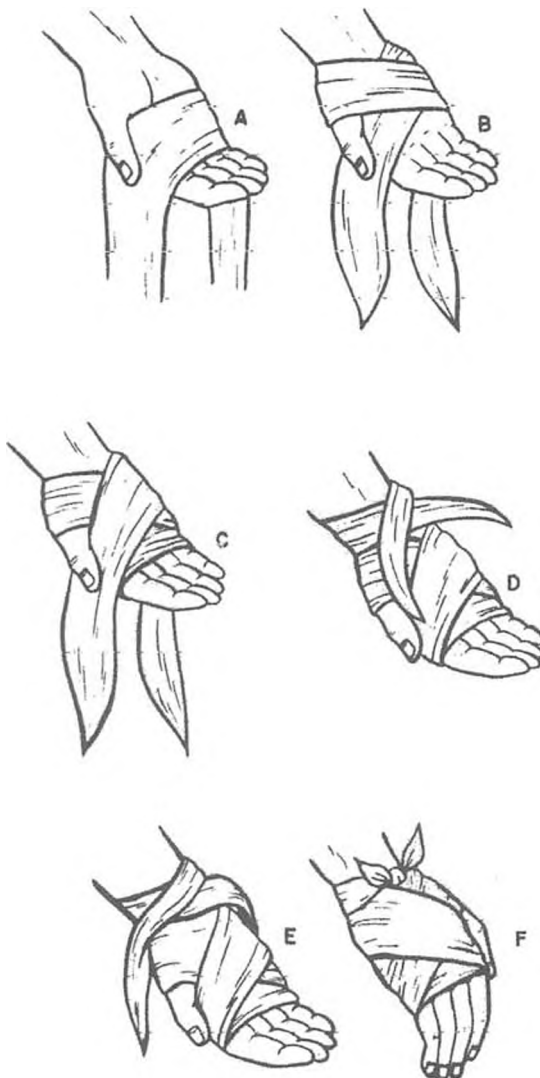
²³ Socio-economic bases, religious and customary bases, and psychological expressions of the traditions of village and

community are analyzed systematically in the monograph *Vietnamese village* by Nguyen Hong Phong (Literature, History and Geography Publishing House N.X.B. Van Su Dia 1959).

²⁴ The terms "morality—responsibility" and "morality—conviction" are Max Weber's.

²⁵ *hoa va cu dan dong bang Song hong* (Culture and population in the Song Hong plain). N.x.b. Khoa hoc xa hoi, H.1991.tr.184

²⁶ "Wealthy people, powerful nation" is a familiar phrase. The writer of this essay came across "cheerful people, powerful nation" in an article by Professor Hoang Xuan Han on the occasion of the Independence Day, September 2, 1990. "Cheerful people, powerful nation" was taken by him as a main goal of the cause of building and protecting the country in peace (See *Hong Linh*, the magazine of the Association of Literature and Art of Ha Tinh, No 3, 1993).



A Compilation of Survey Results on the Job Placements of Vietnamese and Southeast Asian Minorities via the GAIN Program and Community Based Organizations

Catherine Bischel, M.S., Certified Vocational Evaluator

In addressing the challenges of job placement for Vietnamese and other Southeast Asian minorities with limited English speaking ability, this study attempts to identify the most effective job goals for these individuals.

As many of you know, Foster Assessment Center & Testing Service (FACTS) provides vocational evaluation and assessment services to vocational rehabilitation clients. FACTS also provides services to other programs, including individuals in the GAIN program (recipients of AFDC - Aid to Families with Dependent Children). This survey was compiled to contribute information to those rehabilitation professionals working with Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians, and in no way implies FACTS is providing placement services. This survey has proven an invaluable tool to those who are presently utilizing it. Due to the length of the survey, the entire contents could not be printed in the SCRE newsletter. To obtain the entire survey, or if you have any questions, comments, or input please contact: Cathy Bischel, FACTS (Garden Grove), (714) 537-5171.

In gathering the data, professionals who specialize in assisting these Southeast Asian minorities were sought out. Specifically, responses were sought from the Department of Social Service Case Managers and nonprofit agencies in Orange County. This report is a compilation of the data shared by these professionals. To protect the privacy of the participants and their participants, all comments were recorded without the names of their authors. For anonymity, we refer to all those who participated in this questionnaire as "respondents", and the Southeast Asian individuals with whom they worked as "participants." Time Period: This questionnaire was conducted during the time period of October through December, 1993. The questionnaire reflected job placement activity between April, 1993 to December, 1993 for this population of limited English speaking adults.

Effects on Job Placement

The Annual Planning Information report for Orange County, also published by the Employment Development Department (EDD), reported that the number of **employed residents** in Orange County **increased 2.3 percent** (between 1991 to 1992). Meanwhile, the number of **unemployed residents increased by 31.4 percent**. In other words, the growth of unemployed residents far outnumbered the growth of employed residents. Viewing

this fact, the unemployment rate is not expected to show much improvement through 1994. Thus, economic growth in Orange County has stagnated, or showed retarded growth at best. This economic stagnation is expected to continue through 1994.

In the Annual Planning Information report from the EDD (June, 1992), the economic outlook was summarized as follows: "After six years of steady... decline in unemployment...a leveling off occurred in 1990. High housing costs, overcrowded freeways, and sharp declines in construction and manufacturing contributed to the slowdown. Unemployment...is projected to average between 5.4 and 5.8 percent in 1992 and 4.7 percent by 1996." Additionally, the 1993 Annual Planning Information report indicated, "A period of slow growth in Orange County has continued longer than expected and is anticipated to continue through 1994. Total non-agricultural wage and salary employment in Orange County declined...a decline of 1.9 percent over the 1991 level..."

Despite some growth in specific industries, the overall economic outlook for Orange County, California, is poor. For Southeast Asian immigrants, this weak economy, coupled with the difficulties of assimilation, may make job search a formidable challenge. Understanding the barriers in the economic environment of these immigrants is essential in understanding the numerous difficulties experienced by the subjects of this report.

JOB PLACEMENT OF VIETNAMESE AND OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN MINORITIES

Social Service Case Managers and other professionals from nonprofit agencies were requested to report the fields in which their Vietnamese participants were placed in the last six months. These jobs were divided into vocational industries classified by the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles*: Clerical/Sales, Service, Processing, Machine Trade, Bench Work, Structural Work, and Professional.

According to these professionals, the **most successful job placements for Vietnamese and other Southeast Asians** occurred in the fields of Clerical/Sales, Service, Processing, Machine Trade, Bench Work, and Structural Work. **Oftentimes, it was noted, these successful job placements were realized through the individual's direct placement within their own social communities.** Also, it was observed that part time positions proved more accessible than full time positions. Therefore, some individuals began at part time positions, then advanced into full time jobs.

It was noted that the Vietnamese population placed more individuals in the fields of Clerical/Sales (46 percent), while the other non-Vietnamese Southeast Asians were placed more in the fields of Structural Work occupations (15 percent), and Bench Work Occupations (46 percent).

TRAINING PROGRAMS

To acquire the previously mentioned jobs, specific training programs were utilized. These programs included: Direct Placement, Regional Occupational Program, Job Search, Key States Initiative, Job Training Partnership Act, vocational classroom training (performed through local colleges), and vocational counseling offered through colleges (utilized by students enrolled in vocational classroom training programs).

The most successful strategy for job placements was through direct placement in new jobs (49 percent), however, a wide variety of other programs were necessary to successfully employ the other 51 percent of participants.

To learn the effectiveness of these training programs, we asked the respondents to elaborate on the programs which they felt were most useful. Some of the respondents suggested Pre-Employment Preparation training, Regional Occupational Program, Vocational Classroom Training, and Direct Placement. Another respondent suggested Pre-Employment Preparation training (PREP), stating, "PREP teaches American work ethics. However, PREP is not able to place limited English speakers at sites where English is spoken. Instead, these individuals are placed in Vietnamese agencies. ROP, on the other hand, will train anyone almost anytime."

Vocational classroom training was suggested by another individual, who stated, "Participants respond best to this type of training." A Self-Initiated Plan is the favorite of still another respondent. This individual promotes responsibility on the part of the client by 1) setting a time limit, 2) having a closure date, and 3) providing active encouragement and support to assist the client in ending dependency and getting off aid. This respondent also likes Job Club and Job Search because it "activates them (the participants) to utilize their own resources";

TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR PARTICIPANTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH

Elderly Vietnamese participants appear to face serious obstacles in their quest for jobs. These difficulties may arise from demonstrated difficulty in learning English, and minimal work experience in the United States. In recognizing these difficulties, our respondents offered a pool of occupations which appear less strenuous physically and which require minimal English language skills. One respondent noted that sedentary jobs were particularly appropriate for older Vietnamese individuals: "Because of the Vietnamese cultural belief that one becomes frail after 50, elderly Vietnamese participants prefer jobs that don't require a lot of walking or standing." Another respondent noted that part time positions were more accessible than full time positions, especially for those with difficulties in locating a job.

When asked what kinds of **jobs** were **available in the social communities of Southeast Asian Minorities (Little Saigon, Little Tokyo, etc.)**, jobs requiring little verbal English skills and education or formal training were recommended.

INAPPROPRIATE JOBS

It is recognized that a thorough report cannot elaborate on the successes without also recognizing the difficulties of job placement for this population. Thus, we gathered data on the **jobs which have proven particularly inappropriate for Southeast Asian applicants**. These include:

- Child Care positions and Insurance Claims positions were observed by one respondent as being particularly difficult markets for men;
- Electrician (one respondent reported that currently, there are only a few openings per year);
- Cosmetologist (not accepted by GAIN as a valid occupation, because the earnings are not substantial enough for the client to be considered self-sufficient);
- If the client lacks English, these jobs were indicated by some respondents as being inappropriate if the client was placed in an English speaking community:
 - Bartender
 - Cashier
 - Salesperson
 - Child care Workers
 - Pharmacy Technician
 - Office work;
- Any job the client does not want to do: one respondent stated that although English skills and job skills are a factor, the client's motivation may be impaired if forced into an undesired job; and
- Occupations that require advanced phone skills.

CONCLUSIONS

Again, this is only a synopsis of the original report. We have tried to briefly address all the different aspects of job placement for this population. (Please note, some of the above responses may be contradictory, as different professionals deal with different participants. A program that is highly viewed by one respondent may be poorly viewed by another.) We understand that humans are unique and no study can predict the facts relevant to every individual in this population. On the contrary, we have tried to accumulate enough data to note patterns

and trends in the job placement of Vietnamese minorities in Orange County, California. The process has been both challenging and highly enlightening. We hope the facts uncovered in this study may be helpful for you as well. For a complete listing of job placements and training programs please contact the author of this report.



Family

John Shaw, 220 Summer St., Cranston, RI 02910.

The young woman glided past me into the house when I opened the door. The older one thrust her hand into mine, maneuvered around me, and poof, we were inside the house with the door closed. I may have closed it. I don't remember. It was before morning coffee.

I may have said "Hey" a few times. I did not have the feeling that I was being menaced.

"He knew me as Co Van," the older one said. She released my hand and asked if they might visit.

I told them they seemed to be visiting already.

"We are here on my account," the young one said. "I am Ly Thi Lien and I feel it is time my family knew me."

"You're Chinese," I said.

"I am Chinese," Co Van said. "Lien is Amerasian—half-'n-half—what the Vietnamese call *con-lai*."

"I was conceived in room 602 of the Park Hotel, 35A Nguyen Trung Truc, Saigon," Lien said. "My father was an officer in the United States Navy."

I said, "What?" and she repeated, word for word.

"Jimmy," Co Van said. "Your husband."

"What hocus-pocus is this?" I asked.

"No hocus-pocus," Co Van said. "Your husband and I had a relationship and Ly Thi Lien resulted." She tugged Lien to the door, opened it, and held her in the light.

I said, "Not James." After coffee I might have said something memorable.

Co Van pivoted Lien into profile views and a long full face. "The eyes," she said. "The way the chin curves. The whole look of her. Who can argue?"

I shook. James. Including the off-key smile. The longer I stared the more of him I saw in the young face.

Damn.

"Not James," I said again and reached past the two of them and shut the door.

"I called him Jimmy," Co Van said. "May we talk?"

All the way to hair—the same soft brown.

"Jimmy had vigorous sperm," Co Van said. "Out-standing."

We went into the living room. Lien sat immediately. Co Van stood until I gestured her toward a chair. She dug into her canvas bag.

"Pictures of me and Jimmy in Saigon." She passed them to me. "Notice how close Jimmy then is to Lien now."

"I can produce much other proof," Lien said.

"Good pictures?" Co Van asked.

Good pictures.

"Great PX camera."

I returned them. Co Van shuffled them and told me, "These things happen."

"Would you like coffee?" I asked. They followed me into the kitchen and sat at the table.

I had trouble with the stove. First, I turned the oven on, next I twisted the dial that sent the cleaning operation into action. Finally I got a top burner going.

Co Van asked if she might smoke. I passed her a tray and watched her light the cigarette and exhale smoke onto my ceiling.

"We had an honest friendship," she told me. "I did not feel betrayed when Jimmy left Vietnam without me. I knew about you."

I put sugar and cream on the table without accident. Likewise, in a second wave... saucers, silver and Danish.

"Jimmy was a kind person," she said. "He got me a job as interpreter in the American Embassy. I had studied at a British school in Singapore and spoke good English by the time my family moved to Cholon, so I was a great interpreter."

"Where did you meet James?" I asked.

"The hotel had a roof garden. I met him at a party up there."

I kept my eyes off Lien. I found it difficult.

"In 1975 I married Mr. Hall, an Embassy official, and he brought Lien and me to America. Mr. Hall died last year."

"So did James," I said.

Co Van nodded. "I kept in touch with Commander Luu Van, Jimmy's counterpart who lives now in San Diego."

I recalled informing a Vietnamese in San Diego of James' death.

"Jimmy tried to get me out of Vietnam," Co Van said.

"He enrolled me in the Katherine Gibbs school in Maryland where I could learn to be an American secretary."

"There is a Katherine Gibbs here in Rhode Island," I said.

"Jimmy thought Maryland would be better."

I poured the coffee, sat and attacked it.

"We couldn't raise enough money to bribe Vietnamese officials for an exit visa. So I didn't get out until I married Mr. Hall."

"Where do you live now?"

"Boston," she said.

"An hour's ride away," Lien said.

Yes, indeed.

"Was it only one night?"

"I have nothing to do with any of this," Co Van said.

"I am here only to accompany Lien and lend support."

I waited.

"One year," she said. "We had a friendship for his full tour."

"Did James know about Lien?"

"I wrote immediately and told him. He did not answer my letter."

"Did you contact James after arrived in America?"

She nodded. "He said he would commit suicide if I intruded."

Generally coffee picks me up. "Now what?" I asked. Co Van waved my question toward Lien. "Has it been established?" Lien asked.

I nodded. What else except to nod?

"Now we begin a relationship," Lien said.

"Cards at Christmas? Things like that?"

"Don't be angry," Co Van said.

I was not angry. I was looking in on all this from a great distance. I felt rather tranquil.

Co Van shrugged. "I advised against this. I told her it was crap."

"What do you want?" I asked Lien.

"Do you know how half-'n'-halfs are treated in Vietnam?" Co Van asked me. And told me, "Lousy. Lower than dogs."

Lien seemed to be trying to stare Co Van into silence.

"I'll tell you the problem," Co Van said. "My daughter is beautiful, an American citizen, makes money, pays taxes, has American boys pestering her into marriage... and is still *con lai*. In her mind she has never left the streets of Saigon."

"What do you want?" I asked Lien again.

"She wants family," Co Van said. "She thinks problems don't exist when you've got a family." She extended her hands, palms up. "I've told her that's all crap."

"I want you to announce me to my father's other children," Lien said. "After that, whatever happens, happens." She grimaced. Had she cried I might have reached out and held her and I was not ready for tears or holding.

"I have much respect and affection for my family," she said. She blinked. No tears.

Co Van said, "Is it asking so much?"

"Tell them," Lien said, "that I have been to college. Tell them my mother and I have our own business."

Co Van passed me a card. "Delta Oriental Herb and Grocery Company," she said. "Two retail stores in Boston."

"Busy stores," Lien said. She pointed to the address and phone number at the bottom of the card. "You can contact me there after my family makes a determination."

Tom was predictable. There would be screaming when I told him: "Not Dad... Not my father... lieslieslies..." On and on.

I was not sure of Debby or Joan. I would say, over and over, "Wait till you see her. My God, wait till you see her!"

"Tell them I will not dishonor them," Lien said.

"Did you love James?" I asked Co Van.

"I don't think you should ask that kind of question." I waited.

"I was seventeen. I loved him."

"Did he love you?"

"For sure not."

"Did he say he loved you?"

"Of course. Saigon was all love talk."

"Will you contact me when you've spoken to the others?" Lien asked.

I told her I would.

"When do you think that will be?"

I figured a week.

"We can leave," Lien told Co Van.

"Did he talk about his children?" I asked Co Van.

"Probably. They all did."

"Did James?"

She butted her cigarette and fetched another from the pack she took out of her bag. She struck a match whose flame died before she could use it. "After Jimmy," she said, "there were years of American friends." She lit another match and, this time, got the flame to the cigarette in time. "I have trouble separating memories of Jimmy from memories of the others," she said. "Were it not for the photos and for Lien I might even have forgotten what he looked like. All I remember of Jimmy are Katherine Gibbs and Lien."

"And Dad's boats," Lien said.

Co Van tapped her hands against her forehead. "Jimmy was in charge of building boats out of cement in the old French shipyard on the Saigon River. They kept sinking and his honcho yelled at him. Lots of nights Jimmy couldn't sleep because of it."

"He told you about the cement boats?" she asked gently.

"He told me about the cement boats." More or less.

"So," Co Van said, "Lien, Katherine Gibbs, cement boats. That's all I remember of your James. No offense."

No offense taken.

"Cement boats," Co Van said. "Imagine."

At the door she told me, "It is Lien's concern now. We should try not to meet again."

Lien kissed my cheek.

With the door open, Co Van said, "You are a strong, calm woman. There are some who would have been upset." She shook my hand. "All so long ago, right?"

Right.

I swung a towel about in the kitchen and drove the smell of Co Van's cigarettes out the back door.

I took the wedding album out and for a short while watched James and me happy in there. I thought I might weep. I did not.

I called Tom.

Predictable. He screamed and I held the phone away and waited for him to stop.

While waiting I began my own sounds. I'd sung church choir soprano parts but these now were not high tones—moaning, rather, with aspects of honk and groan, snort and denture click.... a hiss here and there.

And language. What dark words I owned spilled into the mouthpiece.

Tom said, "Mother, you are talking about Dad. You are talking about my father."

So I was.

"Mom," Tom said, "it will be all right. Honest, Mom, it will be all right."

It took a while to flag me down and I hung up aware that my lips stung from stretching, and that I was out of breath.

When I pass the word to Debby and Joan I shall be Co Van's strong, calm lady.

It is entirely possible.

Red Delicious

John Goldfine, RFD 2 Box 236, Belfast, ME 04915.

One September night in 1975, Wilkie Cairns climbed the thirteen stairs to his adopted daughter's room, remembering the creak of his own father's knees as he came to Wilkie's bedroom to administer some punishment. This was a little different, he told himself.

"Phuong?"

She lay on the rug watching TV—halfway into her allotted hour. Without turning from the TV she said, "No hour."

Wilkie said, "That's right, it's not an hour."

Sideways and up, her eyes slid over to him, then back to the TV.

"Phuong? I need to talk to you." He opened his hand to show her a Red Delicious apple he had just picked from the semi-dwarf planted eight years before. It was two weeks shy of ripeness. "These apples are no good now. Leave on tree, okay? Don't pick."

She made no sign.

"Phuong!" The word was strangled—in his throat, between his teeth, in the twist his lips gave the syllable. Fonzie and *Happy Days* had all her attention.

"Hell hell hell." He pulled open her closet door. All the outfits she had been given in her five months at the Cairns' waited neatly on hangers. Some she had outgrown already. Wilkie poked around—nothing. He looked in the bureau and then moved over to the bed. Kneeling, he flipped up the spread and there they were.

Each apple had been picked carefully so as to leave the stem intact—that was something in her favor, he thought. They were lined up in ranks and files, precise as soldiers on parade. He guessed one-hundred-fifty. Maybe two hundred.

They would never ripen, never become eating apples. Selina would have to make pies and applesauce.

"Hell." He looked over his shoulder at Phuong, but without a sound she had moved to the far corner of the room. There, humming softly, she squatted like the street urchin she had been her first seven years—until the fall of Saigon and the babylift had brought her to Goose Plantation, Wadlow County, Maine in May.

"Phuong, no. These apples are not ripe, not good." She seemed fascinated by the swirls in the plaster ceiling. Perhaps her humming increased in volume.

Wilkie started pulling the apples out from under the bed. From the bottom of the stairs, Selina called, "Wilkie? Are you with Phuong?"

He shouted back, "Yeah, I've solved the mystery of the missing apples. Come here and look at this." He knew, knew before she climbed the stairs, that she would be hurt, maybe angry. He knew she was right—they should have done this together.

"Hell, Selina. My favorite tree."

"There are still plenty of apples out there."

Wilkie made a mouth and shrugged.

"What did you say to her?"

"I just told her not to pick them, that's all."

Selina squatted next to the still-humming Phuong. "Let's cook the apples, Phuong. We'll make a pie, a bunch of pies. Cook? Bake? Sugar? Sweet?" Phuong stopped humming and let her eyes meet Selina's. "Let's get a basket, okay?"

"No' hour TV, Mumma."

"We'll do it after."

"Suga', swee'?"

"Yes."

Phuong unbent and moved over to the TV again.

Wilkie could not bear seeing his apples under a bed. He went for the basket himself. There was nothing he could—nothing he dared—say. No one had twisted his arm back in May.

But as he unloaded the basket onto the kitchen counter, he said, as if to himself, "This really is just a damn, damn shame. These are just so *good* if they're picked ripe. Maybe I—"

"Wilkie, there are still plenty of apples on that tree."

"She'll probably sneak the rest of them in over the next few days." He pulled a face a few degrees gloomier than he really felt. Wilkie hated to admit it to himself, but he was pleased that he had finally caught Phuong in a clear and unambiguous wrongdoing. Even Selina would have to admit.

"You know she won't do that. She just didn't understand, but now that you've explained it to her—"

"I do, I do explain, but it can get a little tiring, you know, trying to explain everything."

Selina put the last apples on the counter. "That's just not fair. She's very bright and you don't have to explain things twice."

Wilkie stared at her. "What about the other night when she was watching TV after her hour?"

"All right, but she *understood*. She was just being disobedient."

"Ohhh, *excuse* me. Great—just being disobedient."

"Well, she won't be disobedient about the apples. I don't think they mean that much to her. She probably—"

"Well, dammit, they mean that much to me. I planted the damn tree, I spray it, I prune it, I fertilize it, I mulch it. I don't see why I have to lose all the fruits of my labor because she has some weird need to steal apples."

"She was not stealing, she was hoarding them. She grew up with hunger. She's afraid. Can't you just, just..."

"Apparently not."

"Wilkie—"

"Look, we're planning to spend the rest of our lives with her. It's our job to provide some limits, some structure. If we don't do it now..."

Tears came down Selina's cheeks. "If I'd known how you felt, if I'd known..."

He wanted to say: I didn't know it was going to be like this, our whole life dancing to her damn little tune, every second a new headache and hassle. He patted Selina twice on the shoulder. He said, "Hell, I'm sorry, babe. You handle the pressure better than me. I'm still adjusting. It'll be okay, you'll see, I promise."

Selina wiped her eyes and blew her nose into a paper towel. "It's not really *pressure* for me, Wilkie. I mean I've waited so long... we've waited, I mean, and she's beautiful and bright and—" She blew out a big breath and smiled. "It's not like *pressure pressure*, except when I see how unhappy you are."

"No, no, I'm not unhappy." Neither of them believed him.

Phuong came into the kitchen in her blue denim workshirt. Instead of shorts or trousers she was wearing a maroon bath towel wrapped around her waist in the complicated sarong arrangement she had taught Selina with much mutual giggling. She didn't look at Wilkie.

Selina said, "Come on, Phuong, let's make pies." Wilkie wandered off to the cellar. He had a notion about putting an electric fence around the orchard; he wanted to see how many insulators he had on hand. Even as he went downstairs, he knew Selina would never allow him to set the orchard off with a wire. Hell, even *he* though it was a dumb, mean idea. But still...

Among other things, it made him mad that he was being forced by the situation to think dumb, mean things. He wasn't really like that.

He had forty-six porcelain insulators on hand.

When he came back into the kitchen, Phuong was peeling and coring apples with quick careful movements, and Selina was chopping them. Wilkie twisted his head and neck and closed his eyes. "Why are you *peeling* the apples. We don't peel apples in this family. All the nutrition is right under the—"

"She said they should be white, right Phuong? White apples?"

Without stopping her work, Phuong said, "Righ'. 'Whi' apple'."

Wilkie sighed. Selina said, "We can make some of the pies with skins."

Phuong said, "Ski' queer, ski' dumb."

Wilkie caught Selina's eye. Three weeks of school had given Phuong an obsession with TV and this new vocabulary.

Wilkie said to Phuong, "Well, I think whi' apple' are dumb myself." And then he went outside to exercise the cockerpoo, Bandy.

As he and Bandy walked through the orchard, past the Red Delicious tree he had planted and labored over, Wilkie, with eyes and fists both clenched, threw his head back. "Hell hell hell!" he said into the warm night air.

Selina called Phuong in Portland. "Hi. It's Mumma."

"Hi, Mumma, how's Daddy?" Selina silently shook her head. Phuong could picture her by the phone in the kitchen and knew what she was doing. "Is he done with the chemo?"

"He says he's through; the doctors don't agree."

"Oh."

"He's checking out of the hospital in the morning."

"Is he going back to work?"

"Ah... you haven't seen him for a month. He's really not... he isn't capable of going in right now. Going in any more, I guess."

"Oh." The silence swallowed them, each alone with her own thoughts. Finally Phuong said, "I'll come home this weekend."

"That would be wonderful."

Wilkie sat in the back parlor in a wheelchair, listening to Mozart's *Requiem*, looking out at the orchard and the fields beyond. But he'd seen Phuong pull into the dooryard. "Some car. How long have you had that?"

"A few months, Daddy."

The car was new and fire-engine red. Its license plate read: PHUONG. Wilkie said, "Well, I guess they'll see you coming without any problem."

Phuong smiled. "That's the idea."

"Is it?"

"In real estate it doesn't hurt." Wilkie shrugged. "I didn't know you liked classical music, Daddy."

"It doesn't hurt. About the only thing that doesn't."

Phuong's facial muscles tightened. "What do the doctors say?"

"Hell, you name it, they say it."

"I bet. So—where's Mumma?"

"Out in the orchard checking on the damage."

"What happened?"

"We lost some trees in the damn storm Wednesday night. How was it in Portland?"

"Nothing special."

"You know that Red Delicious tree you used to like so much. Do you remember that tree?"

"The really dark purple apples? Very sweet?"

"Uh-huh. Take a look. You can see it from here."

Phuong leaned over the wheelchair to see out the window. "Here comes Mumma."

"Flopped right down on its side. I checked my records. I planted it in 1967. You weren't even born."

Selina came in and hugged Phuong. "Hi."

"Hi, Mumma."

Wilkie interrupted. "How is it, Selina?"

"I don't think there's anything to save. It's all rotted out and snapped right off at the roots."

"Hell, that's what I was afraid of. Probably it was the weight of the crop that brought it down."

Phuong said politely, "Was it a good crop?"

"Yes, it's been a wonderful year for apples. They would have been ripe in a month or so. Too bad—I know they were your special favorites."

"I like all your apples, Daddy." Wilkie shrugged.

Phuong watched at lunch as Selina helped Wilkie with a little yogurt and fruit. She had never seen him so thin and tired and gray. After the meal she climbed the thirteen familiar stairs to her room and found a denim workshirt and a pair of jeans in her closet.

"I'm going into Dublin for a while," she announced.

Wilkie paid Phuong's comings and goings no more attention than he ever had.

Selina said, "Have fun."

Phuong had no luck in Dublin, Southport, or Bangor. Come back in season, in the spring, they all said.

Finally, a clerk in Hampden suggested a nursery in Winterport.

In Winterport they said they could get her a whip, but the soil would be all muddy from the storm the other night, she might get dirt in her pretty new car.

"It's a gift," she said.

They said it didn't make any sense to plant in August, especially apple trees, especially an early bearer like this Red Delicious. But Phuong just shrugged.

"It's a gift."

POETRY by DAN DUFFY

THE FIRST WAVE

The first wave is a rogue. It turns the boat broadside to the next regular wave, which turns the boat over. The third wave drives the boat down, and everyone who is below deck drowns.

The opponent keeps sending one glove straight at your chin. It is always the first punch, with a second and third to the side of your head, or again at your face with his more powerful hand, or bent down reaching at your body. But you are a fighter, and you are doing the same thing to him, and every punch he throws exposes his face and body.

The soldier must be like the sea. A soldier should not fight. The able commander puts his men by a trail where the enemy will pass in a moment when they are not fighting men, but guys carrying stuff, fellows trying to get home. The soldiers press wires together and blow the enemy apart with explosives, then lay fire into the bodies until none of them can plausibly get up. Then a few of the soldiers go out and gather papers and letters from the dead bodies, and put more explosives under them, to blow up anyone who comes along who isn't a soldier for the moment, but someone trying to clean up the dead. Then they run like hell.

No army wins a battle that way, or a war. Medals are for the soldiers who start to fight, who charge a machine gun alone instead of flanking it in a team, for a small group who run with an audacious commander right at enemy soldiers who are waiting for them with explosives and fast guns. Soldiers get real medals for acting like men, like amateurs, and being seen by an educated professional, an officer, who writes an exact description of the crazy thing he saw. A lot of officers get medals, but some of them are actually for being men. You can read the citations for the Medal of Honor from the Civil War through the Viet Nam war in a book published by the Library of Congress and available at every Federal Document Depository to see what I mean.

Dan Duffy, Viet Nam Generation, 18 Center Rd., Woodbridge, CT 06525.



POETRY by LEO CONNELLAN

WET FOURTH of JULY FIRE CRACKER

We didn't go kill and die in slippery
blood of old men and women, their smell
like rusting sweet plums, to
come home and reminisce.

This is a wet Fourth of July fire cracker, man.
Cool ale house music hums in the bandanna
around the insanity in my cloth circled skull
from death in ankle deep water and helicopters
clucking like spent weapon chambers... killing
children because we feared they'd explode in
our embraces. Sun and breezes fanning us

as we slaughter. Blood pours out of rain
washing wounds. We got missed in the
rat tat FFF-boom! and home
sure we had picked all the blood sucking leeches
off us but there is a wet Fourth of July fire cracker
at Gettysburg...

It's even written in the *New York Times*..
"After their 'victory' today
Union horsemen paraded a captured Confederate
banner in front of Federal ranks..."

And I didn't come home for this, man!
"Confederates breached the Union line
then fell back... as they did Yankees ran after
them trying to snatch a Rebel battle flag"...

No, not home for this... on my
Fourth of July too, man! Adults caught up in
enduring fascination of imagining
killing and being killed. We cannot stand
peace and life... We are going to die
and hurrying it is relief.

But the youngsters here barely graduated
out of their high schools into a world that
explodes, are disgusted. I can go into
McDonalds in Gettysburg wearing a
Civil War uniform and people will ask me
which side I'm on where Pickett's charge
north that might have won for the South
was stopped at Cemetery Ridge.

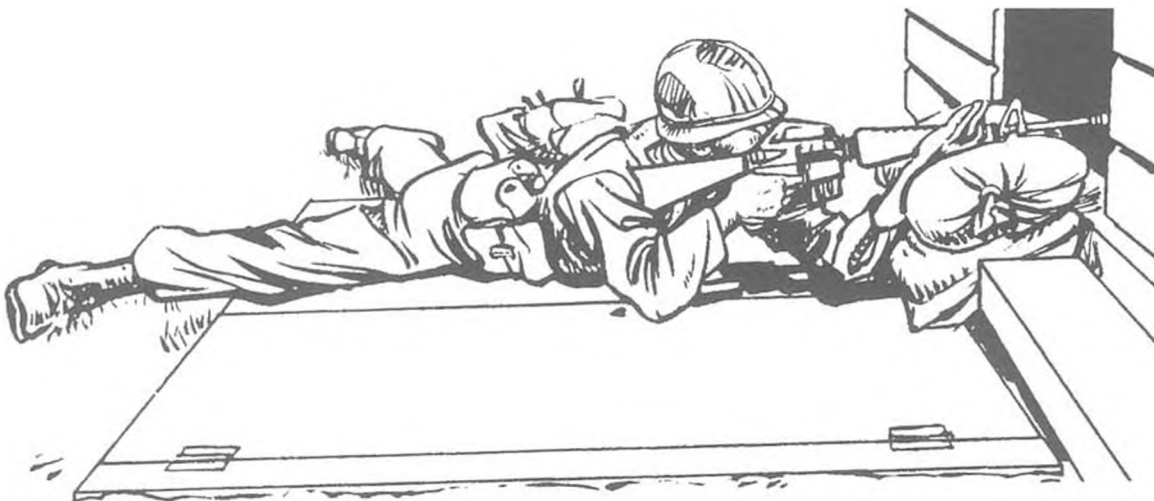
—&—

The still-agitated Southerner comes here to look
at where resentment and fury is deep in us at
loss of our slaves. The Northerner
comes here because John Wayne would. Ike would.
George Patton would... "th're-ul Amuricans!"
... either oblivious of or banking out our Wiscasset, Maine
mansions built of wealth earned Sea Captaining slave ships.

No, man, today real Americans are screaming nightmares.
Now the Draft Dodger and free ride Colonel, fat office boys,
teachers, lawyers who weekend in fatigues for the money,
cocky in exhibitionism and out of the side of their mouths commands
never intended to really go somewhere like
we did, hoping not to be bamboo impaled, inured to dying...
... Then poor farmers joined up just for the money
lonely, hungry, nearly starved, ate rats... Slaughter, death
Colonel Higgins strangling for the world,
not some game to reenact.

... "Yesterday a fist fight broke out on the
battlefield when somebody dressed up in a
Union uniform unhorsed a man dressed like a
Confederate who seized the Stars and Stripes..."

*Leo Connellan, Box 224, Hanover, CT 06350-0224. This poem is from
Connellan's new book of poems, **Provincetown and Other Poems**, now
available in bookstores and from Curbstone Press, 321 Jackson St.,
Willimantic, CT 06206, \$11.00, plus \$2.50 for postage and handling.. © by
Leo Connellan 1996. Leo Connellan is a 1982 recipient of the Shelley
Memorial Award and is Poet-in-Residence of Connecticut State University.*



SHAKESPEARE IN THE SANDS

Steven Gross, 7857 Dacosta St., Downey, CA 90240.

I am in the belly of a modified T-54 tank, my eyes never far from the gunning sites or my right pointer finger from the cannon's round red fire button. But I am no warrior. No. I am in this war by accident. By mistake. It is dusk. Our column of tanks heads south along the canal toward the outskirts of Suez. It's rumored these are the last days of war. Kissinger has been shuttling between Washington, Cairo and Jerusalem, trying to reach an agreement for a formal cease fire. That would be fine with me. Word's out that tomorrow, before dawn, we move with the infantry toward the oil fields by the harbor for some search and destroy.

Though this stretch of canal along which we travel has been secured for days, we're as taut as match sticks about to be struck. Benny's riding with the hatch open, playing with the night vision goggles. The 30 calibre is primed and ready to rock and roll. In the meantime, I'm in my spaceship. We are flying through the stars, about ready to rendezvous with the Federation of Planets forces to drive the enemy back beyond the Great Black Hole. The communications equipment behind me, with which I must check from time to time to make sure we're on the right frequencies, crackles. There are small red and green lights on the equipment which, if I turn off my small overhead lamp, make the inside of this tank seem even more like the spaceship in which I also travel. And that's where I am now. In a spaceship, streaming through space. I am not in a war along the Suez Canal. I am not wearing an asbestos lined flame proof jump suit with a flight jacket while sitting in a captured Russian tank. I do not periodically put my eyes to the sites of the 100mm canon, switching on the infrared to peer into the green night. I am not here. This does not exist. I am in space. A great battle is about to be fought. My craft can outmaneuver anything in the galaxy. Even more reassuring, is that my crew and I have been together through three inter-galactic campaigns before.

It's dark. I'm tired and I'm hungry. Now that we're only 10 kilometers outside Suez, I receive a communique to switch radio bands. Soon our company of armor will reach our position and make a circle with our tanks like a covered wagon train in the movies, our cannons pointing out to the night, our guns greased and ready, our eyes tired, our fingers itchy, ready to pull any trigger or push any button that will help keep us in this universe.

"You asleep?" Benny asks, peering down into my hole from his perch just above and behind me, nudging me with the heel of his boot.

"Fuck no."

There's a crackle in the intercom. It's Chaim, our driver. "Anyone got a candy bar?" he asks. Chaim's Hebrew, like mine, is halted, skewed. As immigrants, we haven't mastered the language, but we've mastered who and where we are. Chaim drove tanks in the Russian army before immigrating to Israel. I never drove a tank in the United States. When I was lucky, I drove my friend

Harold's beat up Studebaker—the one without reverse or a window on the driver's side. I was an English lit student. A draft dodger. A war protester. I was writing the great American novel and wooing unsuspecting coeds with my poems. And now I'm in space, deep space, guiding my craft toward the mother fleet like a wayward whale toward its herd. I am the man who makes this ship spit out fire and hell. I am Vishnu—the destroyer. I've stopped counting the dead and wounded. It's hard to identify bodies in space. The debris just floats away. I just have to tolerate that there's been death—and that's it. A star is born. A star goes out. This is the business and handicraft of God in outer space. I call it "Godwinking." A light goes on. A light goes off. So far, our lights are still on.

I'm tired, hungry, and can't wait until I can drag my sleeping bag from between the two eighty pound fragment shells and out into the night. I take a little bite from the Dutch chocolate my mother-in-law sent last week and think of putting the bag down beside the tank for the few hours of sleep I'll have before tomorrow's mission. I am not a religious man, but thank the Lord for letting me survive another day. I'm surprised I haven't panicked the few times I thought I wasn't going to make it. Fear never even came into it. I think that I was angry—angry and resolved. The afternoon our armored column crossed the canal and three migs swooped down, I was riding on top with Benny. Rafi, our loader, was below in my seat. Acting on pure adrenalin laden instinct—before Benny even uttered a word—I grabbed the 30 calibre and began firing. Three tanks in front of us were in flames, but it wasn't my instincts which brought the migs down. Our air force chased away two of the migs and made a kill on the third. I must admit that was a beautiful sight—first the sky sucking in on itself, then the thud against the ear drums, then the rip of orange and black where the mig had been. Such thrills, though, don't comfort the wounded. As we rushed to their aid, I thought I was an angel of space on a mission of mercy. I was shaking when the helicopters med evacked the four casualties to safety and, hopefully, to healing. Several times that night I thanked the Lord I didn't believe in.

Days before, while maneuvering toward a staging area to cross the pontoon canal bridges, we wound up somehow in a mine field. I can't remember what I was doing at the time. No doubt, daydreaming. At first I thought there was an earthquake because of the way the tank seemed to lift gradually into the air and then slowly back down again. Then I smelled the acrid odor of burning wire and rubber and noticed smoke pouring through the metal plates beneath me. It was Rafi who said over the com, "Fuck, we hit a mine!" So there we were, floating in space, lost amidst all those evil looking asteroids wired with nuclear explosives by the Federation of Planet's arch enemy. Come within just a few thousand kilometers of one of those nasty little asteroids and *whoof*, you're gone! We were stuck in that mine field nearly twelve hours. They had to call in a special demolition team from somewhere near Ishmalia to get us out. Even with all their bravado, those demolition guys gave us a path less than a foot wide to crawl along until we were out of the

field. The tank ahead of us had taken the full brunt of the blast. At about ten that morning they said all right, you can get off the tank now and crawl along that path. Good. Good. I didn't want to have to take another dump hanging with two hands from a rung on the side of the tank with my bum pointed over the strapped-on ammo boxes, aiming for an arch-like trajectory toward the sand and rock below. I kept thinking of the movie *Kelly's Heroes* which I had seen just a couple of years before, where Donald Sutherland's motley crew crawls through a German mine field inch by grueling inch. If Kelly and those madmen could do it, so could I.

I was the last of the crew off our tank. Benny and Chaim were already cleared of the field, waving their arms and shouting encouragement through the morning air just now turning from crisp to sluggish. Rafi was still on his hands and knees, about two thirds of the way there. I headed down the rungs on the side of the tank—and slipped. I don't know what happened—or even how it happened—but the next thing I knew, I was sprawled face down in the dirt and sand, a good two thirds of me outside the orange flagged safety path the demo guys had marked. "Don't move, don't move!" someone was yelling. But I lifted my head to see what the commotion was about. Rafi, by that point, was already safe, and I could make out people straining their necks, someone even sitting on someone else's shoulders—to get a good look at the mess I was in. The muscles in my neck and shoulders were killing me and I let my face fall back into the earth, trying to distract myself from the tickle in my nose caused by breathing in sand. Two hours later -two hours!- an area about five feet square around me had been probed and cleared — except for one stubborn mine they couldn't defuse. Finally they said to hell with it and told me to slowly, slowly, roll back to the path marked by the little orange flags. Which I did. While holding my breath. While squeezing my eyes. While only breathing again when someone shouted, "Okay, crawl, crawl!"

"We thought you were a gonner," Chaim told me with his arm around my shoulders. Someone nearby, probably a demo guy, nodded. Someone else nearby said I was lucky. But I didn't feel lucky. I felt cheated. Cheated and stupid. I knew that I had been lost in space, adrift in my survival pack, cut off from my ship and any chance of rescue, doomed to drift for eternity. Sheepishly, I returned to the others. I had survived. And that's what I was intent on doing—tonight and tomorrow and the day after that, over and over and over again as long as I had to.

That night outside Suez we made camp alongside a bombed out sheet metal factory. We pulled the tanks into a parking lot full of craters and pock marks. Somewhere in Suez, a fire was raging, setting an eerie glow against the background of twisted sheets of metal from what remained of the factory. I thought of Dante and Breughal and other scenes from hell. This was no doubt one of them—and I started laughing. Chaim gave me one of those "You're a Crazy American" looks. After shutting down the tanks, we met for a rehashing of the day and a briefing on what might be expected tomorrow. Towards the end of the briefing the company commander said

more details would be given to us in the morning once we were rolling down the highway toward the port. I interpreted this as sounding highly mysterious. We were on a secret mission of grave importance. The very future of the Federation of Planets was at stake. Any slip up from our unit and it would all be over. I mean over. Half the known universe could be gone in one blinding instant. While making routine maintenance checks on our tank with a wrench, a can of oil and my flimsy flashlight, I thought of ways to save the universe. The rest of the crew was already eating, scraping at their lousy rations since no fires were permitted. I longed for those nights of training and maneuvers when we could build bonfires and sing and dance into the night if we wanted, far from the enemy or even our own troops. Chaim and the few other crazy Russians in the company were usually the only ones besides myself up to such antics. I finished the maintenance check and sat down with the rest of the crew. The rations were depressing. I wondered what my acid dropping high school friend Bob would be eating right now in Nam. A lot of the land around the canal and Suez looked like what I imagined Nam to look like: tall palm trees in lush groves, dusty, muddy roads, water buffalo and oxen wandering through the city along with wild dogs and the occasional monkey with its high pitched bark in the trees. Bob Weingart and Stu Kellerman were high school buddies in Nam who sent occasional letters or postcards and on this night of no moon and a breeze rustling in the palm trees beyond the factory and the stars out blazing with their tantalizing notion of time and distance, I hoped Bob and Stu were okay, hoped that whatever missions they had on the morrow were safe and that they would come back in one piece and one mind, and in so wishing, I wished for myself, too, that tomorrow I would come back in one piece and one mind because life was too short and I didn't want it to end in a bombed out town by the Red Sea, even though it had a romantic ring about it—Suez. Bob and Stu were off fighting in places like Dong Nong, Bien Phu and Thong Twong, for all I knew, and here I was in Suez, a word that conjured up romance, intrigue and now this, war and blood, twisted buildings and dead dogs. And I was in the midst of it. I was in space. We were on two days of R&R on a converted Star Fleet freighter. Voluptuous creatures from every corner of the galaxy were here to entertain us and make our days and nights a little less lonely. Such were my thoughts falling asleep later that night. Space and prayer. Prayers spaced between the stars that we would be all right tomorrow, that we would all be safe and find our peace out amongst the stars, at home in the heavens, far away from all this bloodshed.

We were up before the sun, warming the tank engines, checking supplies, loading high calibre rounds into the big guns and placing cannon shells into their racks in the belly of the tank. That's where my home was. The belly of the tank. When I was not in space, I was Jonah, riding in the whale's belly. This was biblical. This was appropriate. Jonah was recanting his sins. I was mulling over mine. That I had sinned was certain. I had no other way of explaining how I had wound up as a gunner on a captured Russian T-54, wearing an Ameri-

can hand-me-down flight suit, trusting my life with a crew which, including me, was American, Israeli, Moroccan and Russian by birth and about to engage Egyptian and Moroccan units on a battered strip of asphalt road somewhere between where we were and the port. A corner of my brain which I respected told me this was utter madness, that only a fool would find himself in such a situation. Well. I admitted it. I was mad. And I was a fool. And there I was. Soon the sun would be up and we would be on our way to God knows what and, maybe, if we were lucky, there would be another day after this one.

During the night it turned bitterly cold, unusual for October, and I felt I had wasted precious minutes scrambling through my things for an army issue sweater and a knit cap I had brought from home. I climbed into my sleeping bag that night thinking of my eighteen year-old wife and my parents and friends. I wanted them to know how much I loved them and how sorry I would be if I never lived to tell them. The Federation of Planets was amassing a massive attack on the vile empire that held in yoke the star systems on the other side of the Great Black Hole. My battle cruiser was to lead the thousands of other ships in Star Fleet into war with the evil empire, and the chances of our safe return did not seem good. I contemplated my service with Star Fleet, my years of unquestioning performance on a hundred worlds around ten galaxies, places my grandparents and parents had never heard of or even dared imagine. The Box Ring Nebulae, the Goose Clusters, Radio Star X-Q-457 and others where I always witnessed the wonders of creation and the indefatigable imagination of God and his creations. And now this creation of his which was me was in mortal danger of being blasted to bits by a greenish-blue death ray or pulverized by a flesh seeking torpedo bullet. Gradually, things around the camp became quiet. I would pull guard duty at two and help rouse the rest of the company at four, when the stars would still be out. The noises around the camp diminished. Sounds sputtered, then died. In the quiet, in the dark, in the cold, I fell asleep. I wonder what I was telling myself that night as I dreamed?

We were in our tanks and ready to roll before five, poised to follow the road that skirted Suez and led south to the port where reports were coming of pockets of Egyptian and Moroccan resistance. For all practical purposes, the war was over. It was just a matter of Kissinger and the U.N. deciding where the armistice lines were to be drawn, who would get which sand dune, which highway, which bunker and vantage point. Rumor had it that the Egyptian 3rd Army was all but surrounded. Whatever encounters we might have today would probably be from pieces of the 3rd which had been splintered off.

By seven I was starved and wondering when we'd stop for a break. I was frantically searching my oversized U.S. Air Force pockets for a candy bar or some gum, when a communique came over the radio that there was infantry caught in a skirmish somewhere up ahead of us on a small road leading into an oil field and bunkers. They were asking our platoon to break for the infantry's

position and take out the bunkers. It took ten eternally long minutes to reach them. The Federation of Planets was going into action. The hour of decision had arrived. There was no turning back now. We were committed. We pulled into position on a dirt road opposite the mound that held the bunkers. Machine gun and small arms fire could be heard and seen spraying the area. It didn't seem that our infantry was in any real trouble, but, still, I was glad to be inside my spaceship and not on the planet's surface, exposed to the elements and stray torpedo bullets.

Before I had time to check in with the fleet commander to verify the radioactive penetration of Betelgeuse 5 on our radar sightings, Benny yelled over the com to bear the turret right and aim at the first bunker by the oil tank. Though it's true that I'm one of Star Fleet's spacer cadets, my astral body often in Vega when it should be in Andromeda, it's also true I'm one of the best in bad situations. I swung the turret, marked my target, and fired. Fire, smoke and dust poured from the bunker. "Hit, hit!" Benny yelled, and I could hear and feel his boots stomping on the metal rest above my head. When the concussion of the cannon fire stopped buzzing in my head, I realized that the small arms fire had ceased. Then, for what seemed like a very long two or three minutes, we all waited in silence—the tanks standing in their tracks, the infantry holding their positions. I was lost in my thoughts, or, more like it, non-thoughts—for I wasn't thinking of anything in particular, my mind full of the jetsam and flotsam of thoughts, but not the thoughts themselves. It was more like sewage on the top of waves rolling in and out of my head. I looked down at my hands. My palms were wet and rubbery. My underarms and crotch itched. I had to pee. Then word came over our radio band that we were to hook up with the infantry that was going into the bunker to check for dead and wounded.

Getting off the tank was eerie, as if I had landed on a strange planet. I couldn't find my sun glasses and had to shield my eyes from the sun. The earth was cracked and dusty, full of boot prints and half-track, tank and other armored vehicle markings. Nearby were pock marks from mortar fire and just beyond that shell casings, canon casings and burnt out vehicles. An infantry sergeant and two privates met up with us. We were told to hold a position by the tank while they went into the bunker. If it was safe, they'd signal us to go in after them. If there was trouble, we were to shoot at anyone trying to escape. So we positioned ourselves on the ground, Benny in the middle, Rafi and me about ten yards on each side of him, our Uzie's pointed at the bunker, watching the infantry guys go in a kind of whirlwind dance of running a few steps, aiming at the bunker, running a few more steps, zig-zagging a few yards, pointing their weapons again, and then finally making it to the mouth of the bunker where they gave short bursts of fire and then went in.

Waiting there under the sun's glare, I imagined Egyptian soldiers coming out with their hands held high in the air, our three infantry guys right behind them. I

imagined waving my Uzie at them, motioning them over toward the waiting half-track that would take them to a P.O.W. unit. I also imagined our guys coming out shaking their heads, saying no one was in there, or that they were all dead and calling for a med evac team to come get the bodies. I imagined aliens emerging from there, too. They were at least ten feet tall and had long purple whiskers streaming from their cheeks, a crown of red and orange plates on the top of their craniums like an intergalactic rooster and large webbed hands at their sides. Our company commander would stroll over to me and say, "You translate for us. You're the only one who speaks their language. We understand you once studied on their home planet. It's good to have you with us in this operation, son."

Minutes passed. We waited. Then I saw one of our soldiers come half way out the bunker opening, waving his Uzie in the air, motioning for us to come over to where he was crouched. Benny said, "Let's go." We got to our feet and trotted over there, dashing up the incline to the mouth of the bunker. I was nearly out of breath. The infantry guy who had motioned us over was named Nessim, it turned out. He had wonderfully large almond eyes. He was young. "Four bodies inside," he said. "I don't know who your gunner is, but he sure hit that thing. Right down the mouth. It's a mess inside. My guys are coming out. You're supposed to go down there and look around for documents. We'll radio the med team to come for the bodies. Good luck. And good shooting." Benny patted me on the shoulder. For a moment, I felt great. I had aimed at the enemy and had hit them straight on. We ducked into the bunker and crawled down eight or ten feet to about a ten by ten cleared space. The other two infantry guys were leaving. I moved my flashlight around.

Then I saw the bodies. Blood was still bubbling from their mouths, noses and ears. They had an odd look about them, like toy soldiers tossed from a ten story building; their arms and legs akimbo, twisted in awkward, impossible positions. I quickly hushed a voice that accusingly told me I was their murderer. Within minutes, the medics were there with body bags. They searched the dead men's pockets, grabbed their tags, then zipped them into the bags and carried them out. Benny and Rafi and I threw our flashlight beams around. The dirt on the floor was soft and cool. The walls were reinforced with wood beams and sheet metal, probably from the factory we had bivouacked at last night. Pieces of mattresses, uniforms, books, and equipment were everywhere. I saw that I was standing in a puddle of blood and jumped back. It looked like Vishnu Himself had whirled in here, seeking revenge.

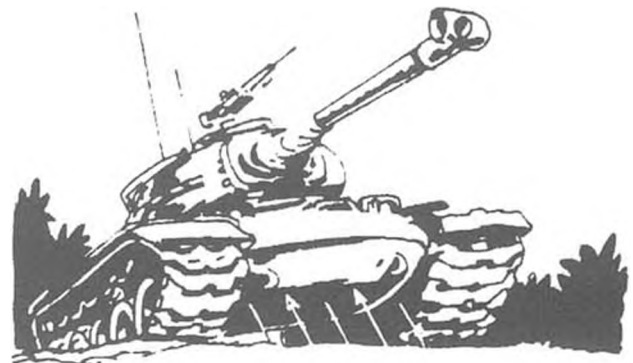
Benny told us to take our time going through all the shit down there and to hand him anything in Arabic or any other language that was even remotely legible. Unable to read Arabic, my attention focused on an open book lying face down near a pile of disheveled clothes. I picked up the book. It was *Of Mice & Men*. I couldn't believe that a book in English, let alone a novel by Steinbeck, was lying there in the dirt. Sifting through splinters of crates and pieces of clothing and gear, I began to piece together a story I didn't like. I found more and more books in English: *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*;

The Great Gatsby; *The Sun Also Rises*; Cliff Notes on *You Can't Go Home Again* and a very old and dog eared edition of *Our Town*. There were notebooks from The University of Cairo. In one was a schedule of classes written in Arabic and English. Most of the classes were in English Lit. The more I looked, the more I found; the more I found, the sicker I got. Kids in the reserve army studying lit and waiting out the war. That awful numbing feeling when I know I'm going away to somewhere not as pleasant as space was coming over me. My hands trembled while aiming the flashlight at the walls, my boots, the books. In the darkness criss-crossed with our flashlight beams, I hallucinated their faces the moment the shell had burst. There was, of course, no doubt, no doubt at all in my mind, that I had killed them—and in doing so, had killed myself. The body that had been zipped up and taken out had been me. He was my literary twin—my double. I was that kid studying literature, and now I was dead, killed by my own hands. "I've killed myself. I've killed myself, I'm dead," was all I could think.

For days afterwards, I made no trips into space. I was on Earth, mourning *him*. Sometimes now, when someone asks me where I am—I know, but I'm not saying. I am with *him*. Our minds are perfectly connected. We are floating past Orion. He jots down a line. So do I. By the time we reach Sirius we will have a poem.

Steve Gross writes: I wrote "Shakespeare in the Sands" from fact, fantasy and 22 years of guilt. This kind of emotional brew makes a strong cup of writing. The urge to write the story first came when Israel invaded Lebanon in 1981. From there it went through several transformations—until finally emerging much closer to the events I experienced as a member of the Israeli Defense Forces during the Yom Kippur War.

Like the war in Vietnam, that seems so long ago—or as recent as my last flashback.



WAITING FOR YANK RACHELL

By David A. Willson, Holman Library, Green River Community College, 12401 SE 320th St., Auburn, WA 98002-3699.

When I am asked what I thought about after I received orders for Vietnam in the summer of 1966, I always think of the evening I spent waiting for Yank Rachell. I don't know if that evening came before or after I knew I was going to Vietnam, and I do not intend to do any research to find out.

Missy and I had ridden city buses from Fort Ben Harrison across the vast humid expanse of Indianapolis to a coffeehouse near some university, perhaps Butler, perhaps not. Missy had no interest in this trip, nor did she have any interest in seeing Yank Rachell. She was aware that he'd played mandolin on many of Sleepy John Estes' recordings, but she wasn't nuts about Estes either. The only reason she knew about Rachel or Estes was that I was a big fan.

If she ever heard of the blues again, it would be too soon was my impression of Missy's point of view. But she'd only been my wife for four years, so maybe I'm overstating my case. I never knew her to buy a blues record and when we divorced in 1970, she took only a few blues records and then only to irritate me. But I'm getting ahead of myself. The summer of 1966, she and I were living together in a rented mobile home while I finished stenography school at Fort Benjamin Harrison. I was a private E-1. And she was on holiday from Library Science graduate school.

She hadn't wanted to sit out summer quarter, but I'd used the force of my personality to bully and guilt-trip her into joining me for a few weeks in Indianapolis. I hadn't quite told her that I was certain I'd get orders to Vietnam (perhaps to die there) and that she'd be tormented by guilt the rest of her selfish little life, but I had implied it.

So she was here and we were now in a coffeehouse at a small table nursing overpriced nonalcoholic drinks awaiting Yank Rachell. Once we'd arrived at the coffeehouse we'd been informed that the first performer was a white folk singer and that later, after Yank had played a gig in a bar he'd show and do a few songs. I began to smell a rat, but what could I do now? The guy who performed first was someone I knew of. He had an album on Folkways, and he was also a character actor who reminded me of this evening over the next twenty some years when he popped up in small parts in countless Hollywood movies. I don't remember his name, but when I close my eyes, I can see his face clearly. I can see his face more clearly in my mind's eye than I can see Missy's, but then I've seen him more recently. I haven't seen her since our 30-year high school reunion in 1990. I didn't spend a lot of time looking deep into her pale blue eyes that night. Or most nights of our nine-year marriage. That's not what that marriage was about.

What was it all about? Waiting, mostly. Waiting for our college degrees, waiting for our jobs, waiting for better

jobs, waiting for me to be drafted, waiting for her psychoanalysis to make her a well woman.

And this night we were waiting for Yank Rachell. This night we waited for about four hours in the hot, stuffy smoky confines of the coffeehouse. Every 45 minutes or so I'd ask somebody who seemed as though they should be in the know if Yank would be showing up soon. They'd reply that they thought so or hoped so, and I'd go back to the small table with Missy.

I wonder what we talked about that evening. Maybe we watched the other people and talked about them. I doubt if we talked about us. I can't remember what we talked about when just the two of us went somewhere together. I don't remember how we decided to quit waiting for Yank, but at about 11:00PM we left the coffeehouse and boarded a city bus and returned to our mobile home near Fort Ben. I left my prescription sunglasses on the bus and squinted the rest of the summer in the bright Indianapolis sunlight. For several months I also squinted in the even brighter light of Saigon before I got another pair of prescription sunglasses.

POETRY BY JEAN C. SULLIVAN

AT HOME WITH THE THOUSAND-YARD STARE

You have invaded my bed
With a battalion of your night demons
And decimated my sheets
With terrified communiqués about, or maybe with
The enemy.
You have survived the battle,
Even the war.
But as I listen to your barrage monologues,
Live with your siege mentality and defensive maneuvers
And watch you secure your perimeter,
I know you are hostage
To yourself.

Infiltrated, my heart is
A reluctant collaborator.

I am not the enemy.
There is no need to erect a fortress or
Take evasive action.

I am an ally
Against the real enemy.
Your warrior.

Jean C. Sullivan, 153 Rider Ave., Patchogue, NY 11772.

POETRY by D.C. ANDERSON

SHE WAS YOUNG AND VERY SERIOUS

She was young and very serious
An animal easily spooked
She was interested in the war
She was interested in Vietnam

Aren't you kind of young, I said
She didn't answer
You mean you're interested in the sixties
No, just the war, she said
I'm interested in how the soldiers felt
There were nurses, too, I said
No, she said, just the soldiers who fought

She stood there, looking away

Was your father a vet?
No, she said
She stood there
She did not look at me
Her feet were straight
and serious
Her feet pointed in a direction
Her head was down

I'll bring you some books, I said

She stood,
young, with serious solemn feet
Saying nothing

She had already been there

THE DAY WAS ANNAMESE GREEN

The day was Annamese green
We worked without many words
in the rain
in themist
On the manor's gentle rise

That day
He wore his old fatigue jacket
and the rain and the mist
Had its way with our hair
and faces

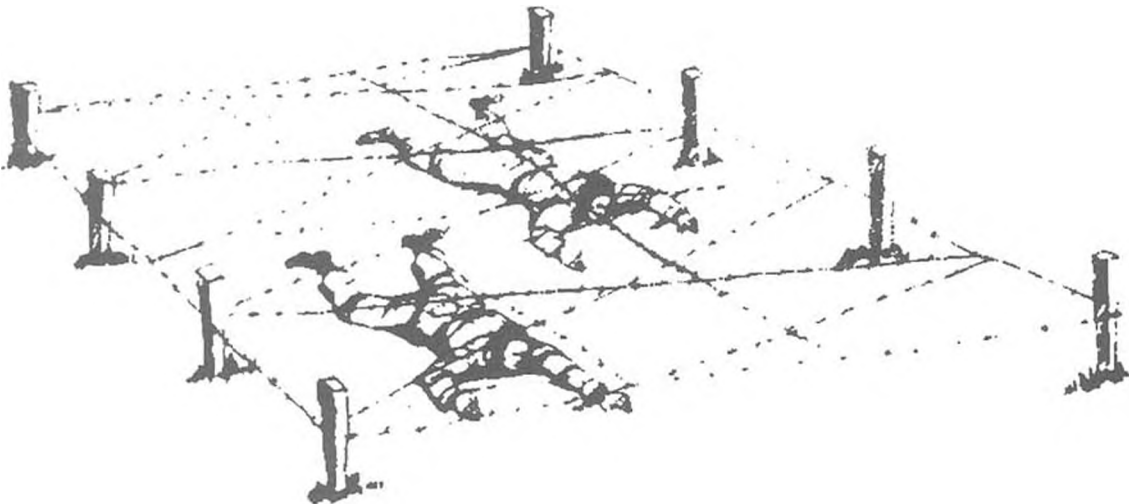
We worked cutting wood
And the chainsaw made defiling noises

But I smelled damp acacia
Of this hill
of his house

We worked cutting wood
in the rain
and mist

We worked without many words
For there was promise of
a fire
and talk
and bourbon

*D.C. Anderson, 14443 124th Ave, NE #15, Kirkland, WA
98034. DC Anderson graduated from San Francisco State
Universtiy in 1967.*



POETRY by THOMAS A. Gribble

RAINY SEASON

How many people do you know
can sing under water,
asks Strub.

Twelve, answers Brady,
counting Neptune,
an old god allowed faults
and Deanne Durbin,
she could sing falling.

Falling chest deep
into hungry water
swallowing hard to the sea,
next would be my nose,
then my eyes,
I could watch forever come true.
Smitty pulls my arm
like a stuck door knob,
tells me to let go
of ammo, boots,
pictures in my pocket.

Under the rain
we sing old war songs,
"Stairway to Heaven,"
"Aqua-Lung," "Country Roads"
Listen to AFRVN report
an American family
washed up on South China Beach.
No one is claiming responsibility.

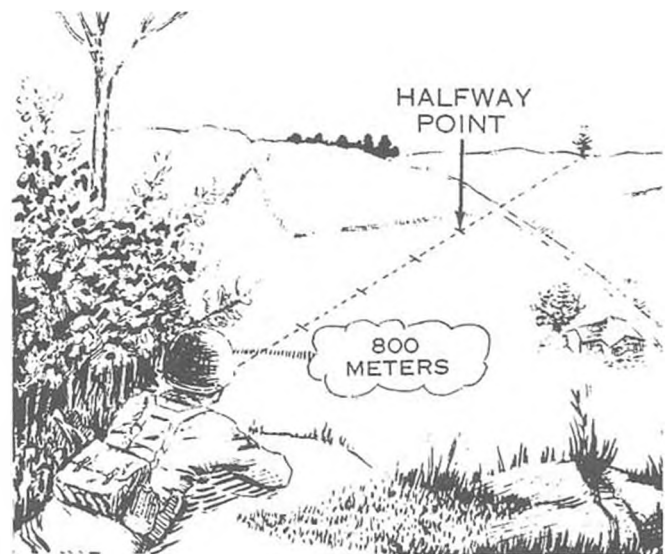
LABOR DAY IN RIVER FRONT PARK WITH A VIETNAM MEMORIAL AND TWENTY THOUSAND LOOKERS

I know you'll believe me
When I say the artist is from Davenport
No one cares if your ass is wet
From sitting on morning
Because that's what people do
In River Front Park
On sun poured Labor Days
Twenty thousand lookers inventory
Clogs, loafers, hightops
Forced right or left
Of the bronze punctuation
Ending four paths to east hill
Block letters glare
Under an angry boot
Of a squatting warrior
His face is no one I know
Everyone I've seen
In tarnished pose
Ordinary men ordinary labor ordinary dead

THIS STORY IS BASED ON A TRUE DREAM FACTS ARE PRESENTED AS THEY OCCURRED

John Wayne Marlboro Man
with never-reload-pistols
steward on a non-stop Flying Tiger
pours Saturday matinee kids
into an outdoor theater
to watch *The Graduate*
Christ Mrs. Robinson
can fill a screen
with forgetfulness
I can't hear her
over steady
click click clicking
of 16mm projector
or steady
racket of M-16 speakers
has it been steady
for two minutes?
pain in my chest
for two decades?
this is not about
an empty hearted war
or timing pain
it's about
poor movie selection
admission price
I'd walk out if I could

Thomas A. Gribble, 707 W 6 Ave #12, Spokane, WA 99204.



Life on the Edge of a War Zone

John W. Williams, Political Science Department. Principia College, Elmhurst, IL 62028-9799.

The kid sitting next to me in my eighth grade homeroom had an unusual claim to fame. His father was the first civilian U.S. government official executed by the Viet Cong. According to eyewitness accounts, it was an execution, not just "an act of war." His father, an employee of the U.S. Agency for International Development, was stopped while traveling in the jungle. He was blind-folded with his hands bound behind his back. Greg's dad was forced to his knees next to a pond and the gun was placed at the base of his skull.

I don't know how Greg learned the details.

One of my Sunday School teachers was a supervisor for a company called Continental Air Services or something of the sort. His attendance at our little Christian Science Society was more erratic than most because of his "job." I think that Burt's company was under contract to the CIA. Somebody had to keep the planes of Air America and Bird Air operating.

I've flown Air America, but it was not your normal airline. Then again, I didn't have your normal childhood. We mounted the DC-3 at Bangkok's Don Muang Airport. The workhorse of air travel lumbered off the runway and banked northeastward. We sat facing each other, strapped into webbed jump seats. One by one we climbed to the single commode in the tail of the aircraft to sit on the toilet and poked our fingers through the bullet holes in the shell of the plane. Air America flew both "soft rice"—food and supplies—and "hard rice"—bombs—in the "secret war for Laos." According to the 1954 Geneva Conference which created the fabulous Kingdom of Laos, the country was to be neutral. There were to be no foreign troops—uniformed troops—in Laos. Although the United States was not a party to the agreement, we wanted to abide by the letter of the treaty. No one, of course, abided by the spirit. Laos was an extension of the war in Viet Nam. What was going on in Laos was not really going on. So, when we traveled to Laos, we really didn't go there. Milo Minderbinder would have loved Laos.

Officially, we and our DC-3 never left Thailand. We carried no passports, so we didn't need to leave. The flight manifest probably showed that we traveled from Don Muang Airport to Udorn Air Base, one of the USAF frontline fighter bases for the Viet Nam conflict. The base, like some half-dozen scattered around Thailand's northeast plateau, supported fighters that protected B-52s, fighter-bombers, and Jolly Green Giants, the massive helicopters used to rescue downed fliers in North Viet Nam.

The DC-3 came low over the Udorn runway, a little too fast for a landing. Good thing, we weren't landing. The wheels barely touched the surface. With a snap they spun free. Officially, we had landed. Actually, we were up and across the Mekong River to Vientiane Airport.

We were there at the request of the U.S. Embassy. It was November, time for one of Laos' biggest holidays—That Luang—the harvest festival. In celebration, the population of the capital, Vientiane, would turn out for a national fair on the grounds of the city's major temple, also called That Luang. Given the size and condition of Vientiane, it was more like a county fair. It was also an opportunity for the competing superpowers to turn up the propaganda heat. The Soviets tried to impress the Laotians with technology. They brought in one of their space capsules. A space capsule in Vientiane, doesn't that beat all. It had to be a Graham Greene novel. The Soviets were able to maintain an embassy right in the middle of the pro-Western royal capital. Somehow, they shipped the space capsule into the port at Bangkok, then trucked it north to the Mekong River, and ferried it across to Laos at Nong Khai.

Few of the roads are paved. Only one was relatively free of potholes (the road from downtown to the American residential compound at "Km 6"). In the center of the main boulevard (it was the only boulevard) was a miniature, Asian version of the Arc de Triomphe. Laos was mimicking its colonial patron, France. Unfortunately, Laos had never had a victory, thus they had yet to have a triumph. This didn't prevent construction of a national monument. It was the primary consumer of the nation's import of concrete. And, since local lore claimed that once the monument was completed something terrible would happen, the intermittent construction never stopped.

The Americans were shrewd. Perhaps they had read the portentous tale of *The Ugly American*. They knew that the Laotians, like their neighbors in Thailand, loved Western pop music. They also knew that the King loved the American musical *Oklahoma*. And they knew that the International School in Bangkok (ISB) had a musical group of over 50 students—singers, band, technical crew—patterned after the "Up With People" or "Sing Out America" shows in the United States.

We were called "The Young Internationals." Our make-up reflected the international diversity of our high school, then the largest international school in the world. Thirty-six nationalities were represented among the nearly 1,000 students in the high school. ISB had over 2,500 students in 12 grades plus kindergarten on two campuses.

Our director had been Ella Fitzgerald's pianist and one of our advisors, a U.S. Army captain, had been a member of the "Up With People" show. We were talented. One of our singers was Madolyn Smith, who starred in "Space Odyssey: 2010" and as Chevy Chase's wife in "Funny Farm." Another was Nina Hennessy, an actress and singer in the Broadway cast of "Les Miserables." We were sharp in our red shirts and white slacks or red and white blouses and skirts.

Sometimes we traveled with the high school band, as we did on a road trip to Taiwan. When the crew was put together—singers, two bands, technical crews, student government officials (for our own press coverage), chaperones—we numbered nearly 100. Luckily, TWA sponsored most of our foreign travel.

I was one of the three-man technical crew. We didn't haul baggage or shepherd musicians around. No, we maintained and operated the most powerful sound system in the Southeast Asia theater. Whatever the American military had, it was neither as powerful nor as crisp. Like those on-stage, we were proud, with the words "Young Internationals" emblazoned across the back of our work shirts.

All this meant, when we set up at the That Luang fair as America's contribution to the celebration, that Vientiane would know we were there. And when Oscar Preston gave the signal and the microphone went live, and those fantastic kids did their stuff—the Laotians would listen. And listen they did, because the first thing we sang was the Lao national anthem—in Laotian. We learned the Thai national anthem and a number of their favorite tunes. We learned their dances. And when we gave performances for the King and Queen of Thailand, we weren't just *farangs*. We were sharing the love of what we were doing.

The Lao national anthem certainly attracted attention. Then, shrewd planners, as the King of Laos made his way around the fair to the American exhibit, we rolled into the theme from "Oklahoma." The King, decked in an all-white uniform, and his retinue headed straight to the American exhibit—us! On cue, a half dozen Laotian "cowboys" riding ponies galloped around the area. (This must be some sort of morality play of Asian cowboys riding for the Great White Father in Washington, DC. Yes, the story repeats itself—the natives lose.)

After a Royal expression of thanks, we cranked up the decibels as one of the girls belted out her best Otis Redding version of "Sitting by the Dock of the Bay." We repeated our performance three times during the fair, giving the United States a most convincing win in the superpower propaganda war.

We gave two other shows, one at the American compound—"Km 6"—the other in Luang Prabang, the royal capital. Vientiane, the closest thing to a city in Laos, was only the administrative capital and power center. The historic and royal capital was many miles up the Mekong River at Luang Prabang. A few years earlier, it was possible to drive or sail between the two towns. By the late sixties, only the most heavily armed convoys, by road or river, dared the trek.

To get to the royal capital, we flew. We traveled by an Air America DC-6, a bit larger and more plush than the DC-3. Although it was a propeller aircraft, we had typical airline seats, two on either side of the aisle, with armrests and reclining buttons, air vents, and reading lights. Aircraft like this were probably Royal Lao Air's only competition. Since the national airline didn't go into battle, Air America certainly had a larger route structure, along with a larger fleet of passenger and cargo planes and helicopters.

Luang Prabang, one of Laos' oldest towns, sits in a valley at the confluence of two rivers—the Mekong and the Nam Khan. Gun emplacements crown the hilltops ringing the valley. The DC-6 made a slow circling descent—a tight corkscrew maneuver—into the valley. I got out my Kodak Instamatic and snapped a dozen blurry

black and white shots of the quiet little town, crowned by a single knob, called Phousi. Atop the knob was a Buddhist pagoda or shrine connected to the street by a ribbon of stairs. Across from the base of the shrine was the royal palace. Although ornate, it was far less grand than we expected.

We landed at the Luang Prabang airport to discover a frontline air base. Crews were loading helicopters with artillery shells to be shuttled to distant firebases in an attempt to stem the Pathet Lao. Americans were supervising the loading of ammunition and flying many of the helicopters. Royal Lao Army soldiers were scrambling in and out of trucks and aircraft. We asked if we could take pictures. "Sure," was the reply, "As long as you don't photograph any Americans." We took no pictures.

Our show was in an open-air gym, which was not unusual. We'd done shows on flatbed trucks and aircraft carriers (when the Seventh Fleet sailed into Hong Kong harbor). We'd been on TV—Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, US Armed Forces. We'd performed before royalty and before our own classmates. One of our most memorable performances was our Christmas tour of the American air bases. Thailand may have been our home, but those soldier-children, barely older than ourselves, and those officers, with kids like us at home, were our most appreciative audiences. I can remember sitting, watching my talented friends sing Christmas carols in the barracks with GIs. It is true that the best gifts are in the giving.

Our Luang Prabang stage was a bit different from the norm. The audience included most of the Americans and the local Laotian elite. Just beyond the seats were hundreds of much poorer Laotians, outnumbered by school kids. And just beyond them were the Laotian soldiers with their World War II vintage M-1 rifles at the ready. Should anything have happened to us (remember that we weren't really here), there were contingency plans for speeding us to the airport and out of the area.

This had not been my first trip to Laos. I had been there a month before—on my own. You see, because of all the traveling I did (at least once a year to Malaysia, plus trips to Japan, India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, etc.), I was the master of my own passport. Dad, frustrated by the complications, gave me control over my passport. The Thai government required that I leave the country every six months. Luckily, the headmaster at ISB (the official liaison between the international school and the Thai Ministry of Education—since we were the only non-parochial school not controlled by the government) took kindly to me and slipped my passport among the stack of teachers' passports. In the eyes of the Thai government, I guess I had become an American teacher.

The International School of Bangkok had, during my five years in Thailand, the most liberal policy I could have wished for. They would support any activity that involved the students in the local culture. They would allow—almost encourage—us to cut classes to travel around Thailand and around Southeast Asia. For example, each year the high school would rent space on the national railroad and transport high school students and parents to the "elephant round-up" in Surin.

The headmaster would warn me when the Thai authorities would insist on my leaving the country, even for just one day. While my parents would pay for my trip, I had to make my own arrangements. The closest spot was the Cambodian border at Aranapatet, but it was closed due to the war in Cambodia. The Burmese border was unreachable. Malaysia was a three-day train ride. And, we couldn't afford plane fare to Hong Kong or Singapore just for me to get my passport stamped. Laos was the obvious answer.

I took the overnight train from Bangkok to Nong Khai and ferried across the Mekong River. Waiting for me was Charles Percy, an American road builder. He and his wife had lived in Laos since 1961 when they drove up from Phnom Phen, the capital of Cambodia. Chuck was a Free Mason, like my father, and the scoutmaster of a little American Boy Scout troop in Vientiane.

American families lived right in the war zone! One of my best friends lost all of his high school year books when the North Viet Nameese army stormed Saigon in April, 1975. Jim Reilly's dad was stationed in Viet Nam with AID. He and his wife left all of their belongings behind. Each time I traveled to Ho Chi Minh City, I expected to see "Erawans," our high school yearbook, for sale in Cho Ben Thanh market. Jim earned his Ph.D. in Middle East History, married a Palestinian, Sabah, and has the cutest child, Kamal Reilly (ain't that the damndest name, but so appropriate for the son of an ISB graduate).

Chuck Percy and his wife, along with most Americans, lived in "a Little America," a compound called "Km 6." It was so named because it sat six kilometers from downtown Vientiane. It had paved streets, little duplex houses with carports, house numbers painted on the curbs, a community center and swimming pool, and an American school through the eighth grade.

Mrs. Percy could have been an American farm wife, standing at the kitchen window, peeling potatoes and talking about life on the farm. Except, she was telling me how one tells if a coup is occurring. "You see," she said, "that two story building down the road is the Laotian version of the Pentagon. It's the first place that's attacked if they are going to take over the government. KM 6 is in the flight path for a bombing run. So, when a plane flies directly over us heading for the defense ministry, we know another coup is underway." Laos has certainly had its share of coups. Over a three-day period, December 9-11, 1960, the country was blessed with four successive governments. The father of one of my classmates was inside the American Embassy during those hectic days in December, 1960. Mortar shells destroyed the old defense ministry, next door to the embassy. The battle set fire to the embassy, with diplomats remaining until the last minute to destroy vital documents. I guess that the Laotians decided that coups would cause less damage to their city if the defense ministry were moved out of town.

There is a character in *The Ugly American*, an engineer, who really cares about the people. He attempts to learn the language and culture. The engineer and his wife really care about the work they are doing. They want to do what is best for the local populace. I believe that these characters were patterned on the Percys.

That book and its sequel, *Sarkan*, are about the implementation of American policy in a fictitious country called Sarkan. The best laid plans are corrupted by well-meaning but ignorant, stupid American officials. It could be the story of U.S. involvement in Viet Nam. The result, of course, is the hastening decline of the country and its fall to communist insurgents. One of the heroes in the book was the Peace Corps-style engineer and his wife who lived among the Sarkanese and learned of their problems. The American couple develop solutions, akin to the alternative technology movement, that are readily adapted to solving local problems. They succeed in making life better and healthier for others around them. They do more to win support for the United States than any propaganda effort. They are also identified by the insurgents as the most effective weapon America has.

The Percys' were like that, although, as an employee of the Federal Highway Administration, he was a road builder. He took me out to one of his road projects. It was in the jungle, far from protection. It was also a local holiday and all the workers were safely in Vientiane. We were alone. I was rather concerned, though he never showed any fear. He explained that his goal was to build a series of "ring roads" around Vientiane. The roads would permit commerce and trade. They would encourage people to expand the city limits. The buffer would push back the jungle and provide a safe shelter for the citizens, in part because Vientiane was considered by all parties as neutral ground. Earlier, Chuck drove me to the American Embassy and then past the North Viet Nameese compound. Laos, technically neutral, has a North Viet Nameese embassy. We got out of the car and walked around the block. We could see the armed guards and the officials in the compound. He claimed that the Pathet Lao war effort was being orchestrated from that building.

Chuck Percy believed that if he could expand that neutral ground, he could bring more people into its safety from the war. He found, deep in the jungle surrounding the city, the remains of an ancient city wall. The rubble was excellent base for a road. He mobilized his Laotian crews and they were in the process of clearing the jungle along the wall. Chuck explained that his workers, whom he had known for years, intuitively believed they were safe with him, even if the Pathet Lao forces were not far away.

He would make every effort to aid the local or jungle folks. Once his crew came across a water buffalo stuck in a mud paddy. The animal was close to exhaustion from the struggle and in danger of collapsing in the water and drowning. Chuck stopped construction and quickly had one of his men wade to the animal with a large rope. They tied the other end to a Caterpillar bulldozer and pulled the animal to safety. The villagers responded with a party and, according to Chuck, warned them when Pathet Lao forces were moving through the region. As a result, the road builders and the Pathet Lao never met.

Chuck gained the loyalty of his crews when a series of accidents occurred. Trees were falling on workers. Tractors were tipping over. Equipment was catching on fire. Workers were getting injured. The Laotians, animists, believed that the gods or spirits, who lived in the

trees and jungle, wanted the work to stop. The accidents were the spirits' way of expressing displeasure.

The Laotian countryside was replete with tales of the spirits and their powers. Many believed in *khon kongs*, protected men who could not be killed. Lao soldiers would wear little bags filled with spiritual objects around their necks to make them invulnerable to bullets. The Thai Black Panther brigade, Thailand's contribution to the Viet Nam War effort, wore Buddha medallions specially blessed for battle.

Phi or spirits have held up seemingly vital projects. One water pump was stopped for five months, even as the fields went dry. The old farmer on whose land the pump stood claimed that the *phi* had been offended. The old man would get sick whenever the pump was turned on. "I know our people need the water, but I will die if it runs again," he told a development official. The official, an Israeli, explained: "After five months, he finally told us why. Ever since our pump got going, he had been sick. Obviously some spirit had been offended. If we kept pumping, he would surely die. And so we asked a Buddhist monk to come. With the proper rites he pacified that spirit, and we could go ahead and pump."

Chuck took his workers' concerns seriously and immediately halted work on the road. He arranged for a special Brahmin ceremony to exorcise the spirits. He paid for the ceremony and the subsequent festivities himself (how do you explain this on a government voucher?). The spirits were evidently pleased and willingly moved to a different part of the jungle. The Laotians were pleased and willingly resumed work. Chuck arranged for a Brahmin priest to periodically clear the path and the work progressed without incident.

On one of my visits to Vientiane, I stopped at the National Museum, a small building at the southern end of the city's main boulevard. At the northern end of town is the yet-to-be-completed monument to victory, the American embassy just a block or two from it. The Museum over looks the Mekong River. I wanted to go to the museum to see a jar, a very special earthen jar.

I remembered reading a satire in *MAD* magazine. It was a cartoon of a real headline that read: "Guerrillas attack on Plain of Jars." The cartoon pictured a gorilla with a rifle running across a row of glass jars.

The Plain of Jars is a real place and it was the center for much of the fighting. The plain is one of the few fairly flat spots in the northern part of the country. The other flat area is the rolling areas of the southern panhandle, controlled by the North Viet Nameese army. Since the plain was a crossroads for travel between mountain ranges, it became the center of military attention. Towns such as Khang Khay and Xieng Khouang became military bases for the Pathet Lao. Periodically the Royal Lao Army or the Meo tribal army of General Vang Pao would stage attacks to hold the communists at bay.

The key feature of the plain is hundreds of huge ancient earthen water jars. They weigh hundreds of pounds, with some over a ton. Rifle battles have taken place among them, with bullets just ricocheting off. Only tank blasts could dislodge snipers from the jars. The area is aptly described as the Plain of Jars.

The government airlifted one of the smaller jars out of the war zone by helicopter. It was large enough for a man to stand in without being seen. According to many, including Clark Neher, "More tons of bombs were dropped on Laos per capita than on any other nation in history." This is not hard to imagine when the American air force was trying to dislodge the North Viet Nameese army from a country of some three million people. The old Lao saying is appropriate: "When the buffaloes fight, it is the grass that suffers."

I've lost contact with Mr. and Mrs. Pearcy. My classmates have become movie stars, military officers, newspaper reporters, scholars, teachers, parents. I have been back to Laos. Little has changed in twenty years.

It was a curious childhood.

John W. Williams is currently an assistant professor of political science at Principia College, Elmhurst, IL 60120. He lived in Thailand from 1967 to 1972, when he graduated from high school at the International School, Bangkok. He has returned to Thailand, Laos, Viet Nam, and other parts of Asia on half dozen occasions.

Makarov 9-mm Semi-Automatic Pistol (pm)



Characteristics:

Length: 106 mm
 Weight: 0.81 kg (1.8 lb)
 Effective Range: 50 m
 Magazine Capacity: 8 rds

POETRY by EDWARD C. LYNKEY

Taps for Dickey Chapell,
Friend of USMC

Her cackling laugh I recall best
while hiking across rice paddies.
Her knees wobbled like a camel's
as she went off like a tea kettle,

bent on taking a next action shot.
One night the whole upstairs burst
into a weird nitrous kaleidoscope.
We crawled straight into a bunker,

chittering as magpies, choked up,
chilled, eating the marmalade mud.
I threw her my helmet, lashed her
lens to my dog tags. Weeks later

a radio report said her boot fell
on a VC mine, and what I'd trade
life in the Hereafter to know is:
Are wars in Heaven shot on film?

THE YARDBIRD'S MANDOLIN

We put in at Mott's Ford to canoe
downriver over a long weekend for
Tuesday at 0950 Shaw was to turn
himself in. But now it was sweet,
slow with the both of us drifting
under a trancy sky without borders.
Now or never we looped Mepps lures

in dogleg arcs to baptismal pools.
Shaw upended gin for his usual bars
were soon to run dry as the cork.
A breeze stoked the birch wood fire,
frying trout; we slung our duffel
on a sandy spit. All night ripples
rolled over the rocks as a mandolin.

Edward C. Lynskey, 9503 Lees Mill Rd., Warrenton, VA 22186. "Taps" originally appeared in Virginia English Bulletin, and "The Yardbird's Mandolin" originally appeared in Verve. The events recounted in "Taps" are derived from Roberta Ostroff's biography, Fire in the Wind: The Life of Dickey Chapelle, which Lynskey reviewed for Marine Corps Gazette several years ago.

POETRY by R.S. CARLSON

THE SURVIVAL of CAPTAIN GREEN

To get passed over for promotion a third time
would mean professional death.
Our Captain Green's shoulders
ached for a major's oak leaves
as he polished his captain's bars.

If the colonel sniffed at discipline on base,
Green called inspections;
if the major griped at equipment loss,
Captain G set radio technicians
to counting Philips-head screws,
toilet paper rolls, and bed springs.

Within his compound
he wanted boots bright enough
To blind his superiors forty miles away—
regardless of monsoon mud.

His infinite tact in asking for air support
rewrote the field manual:
'resupply' became
bumming rice off the ARVN infantry;
'replacement' meant
wait another three weeks.

High command orders for drug busts
brought war inside the wire.

The tank unit across the road
lost a dozen guys surprised by narcs
before they sent their First Sergeant home in a bag.

A touch of tear gas was enough for Captain G.
Users somehow knew
when the stash should disappear.
After the 'surprise' raid on our detachment,
Green collected another commendation—
for keeping his unit clean.

At last came the morning
the Captain packed his duffel for Saigon—
for rotation home to his oak leaves.
He left the lieutenant
to manage any ceremonies
for change of command.

By nightfall, beer sold out at the club.
Somebody grabbed Shithead,
the mongrel bitch mascot,
stood her on the bar and,
sprinkling her with the last of a flat beer,
christened her 'Captain G.'

EASTER Sunday, 1971

I stepped out in crisp fatigues
over well-washed skin.
Monsoons were done:
the level gravel cradled
only an occasional puddle:
the barbed wire at the roadside
stood dusted gray.

From the mess hall
it was two miles across base to the Chapel—
but after six weeks out on the hill,
even that length of level ground
invited walking....

A few yards in front of the Chapel
stood the shell of a battle tank—
hatches welded shut—
mounted on a concrete slab.

Between it and the Chapel steps
stood a flagpole ringed with white stones—
the one directly on line
between the pole and the tank
stood waist high
and bore the tank unit's insignia.

The Chapel signboard said
I was an hour early.
I could wait.
It was good
just to be out of the underground bunkers.

On the hour, the door opened.
I slid into a pew
while the Chaplain's assistant
set up the pulpit wares
and warmed up the midget organ.
Others drifted in.

The Chaplain appeared from a side door.
He ran us through a couple gospel songs
and passed the plate,
read some scripture,
then preached his way
from the loathsome sin God's law exposed
on to the punishing fire and brimstone.

I leafed through the hymnal some,
and stared at the colored plastic
stuck over the windows.

The Chaplain called for repentance
and waited for it to come forward
through another three verses of something,
then announced his evening service:

Tonight, he said, I'll have communion
with any one of you who can prove to me
that you've been born again;
that you belong to what I know to be
a Bible-believing church back home;
that you are presently walking in faith;
that you have not backslid into sin
and have no hidden sins
separating you from God right now.

He closed his eyes for his benediction.
We stared at him—
all us murderers and thieves and drunks
and whoremongers and pimps
and pushers and addicts—
when he was done,
we shuffled out.

The empty tank
still sat defending against the east,
and under the limp flag
the battalion seal
still covered that big whitewashed rock.

A guy could shove all day
and never budge that stone.

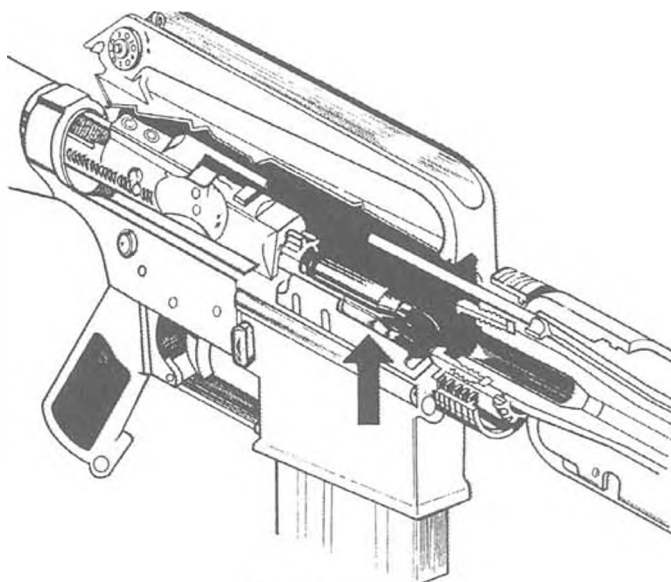


Figure 2-31. Feeding.

Huế: Four Glimpses of the Inner City

1

Waved through the gate,
our truck shudders courier into the Citadel.
A temple beneath a ministry of trees
meditates stone demons versus dragons
into lichen.

2

Lakeside, a fisher-child raises his dipnet,
sieving shadows from sunlight,
and roves on.
The shrine behind him
contemplates dragon battle—
sliced by a passing pole boat—
writing back into mirrored stone.

3

Straw hats press toward the sidewalk,
children push to peer between stubborn legs,
and a boy, crowdside, yells to a friend at lakeshore.
The crowd wedges open at the stone eye
of a mother bearing in thin arms
her heaviest burden,
its black hair hanging
long as sorrow.

4

Wheeling back past the scattering hats,
past the boy netting reflected dragons,
past the cloistering trees to the maroon wall
pitted light ochre in Tết '68,
we clear the gate tower inscribed "Ghi Ôn Chiến Sĩ,"
whip around the concertina wire,
and merge with the honk and fumes of city traffic
before the meaning strikes:
"Remember the Warrior."

R.S. Carlson, 1325 N. Sierra View Dr., Glendora, CA 91740.
"Easter Sunday, 1971" was first published in *Second Essence*
(Spring 1978). "Huế: Four Glimpses of the Inner City," was
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YESTERDAY I SWAM AT CHINA BEACH

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As for most Americans my age, my dawning awareness of who I was took place in the midst of learning about what America was. Images of public events swirled through my life of school, synagogue, and friends. I celebrated my *bat mitzvah* the year John F. Kennedy was shot and four young girls were killed in the basement of a church in Alabama. During my teenage years I read *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* as I read about the assassinations of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Bobby Kennedy and learned to play songs of peace on the guitar. I was confused. If America was the land of the free, why were there Jim Crow laws? How could we call this a great country when people in Appalachia were uneducated and hungry? How could I be taught to honor and trust police and firemen when I saw them beat anti-war demonstrators and turn fire hoses on small children in Mississippi? And why were so-called peace protestors behaving with such anger and violence anyway? Something was rotten in the core of our nation.

I don't know when I became aware that the United States was involved in a war. I was always conscious of the possibility of disaster; I saw films of mushroom clouds before I saw the film on female hygiene; I learned at ten to hide in a corkboard closet in case of nuclear attack. I knew about the Holocaust, though I imagined it to have happened far longer ago than a few years before my birth, and I knew that, had we not gone to war against Hitler, even more than six million of my people would have been destroyed. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out the world—Is there such a thing as a just war? Which is stronger, peace and love or violence and evil? If there is a God of loving kindness, why was there rioting and starvation and chaos all over the world? What was my role as a human being on this earth?

In my first week of college, September, 1969, students set the ROTC building on fire and stoned the firemen when they came to put it out. I stayed in my room in fear. Later that semester when a student strike was called, I agonized over it then finally decided that my duty was to my parents, who were paying for my education. I didn't really believe that my staying away from school could end a war. I didn't want this war to continue, because I didn't want people—Americans or Vietnamese—to experience war. But I didn't hate the boys who were in ROTC or those who served. I would never have cursed at soldiers returning from war—my anti-war sentiments were born of a desire to protect and care for them, to spare them the agonies they live through even now, not to blame them for being the victims of war.

Fastforward twenty years. It is the summer of my twenty-fifth high school reunion. I am a college professor of American literature. I have read some of the literature of the Vietnam War, including a few accounts from the Vietnamese side. I am offered a chance to go for two

weeks to Vietnam with students and colleagues and I jump on it. Vietnam, I think. The Mekong Delta. China Beach. LZs, Hueys, AK47s, Victor Charley, Danang, Saigon, Tet.

May 17, 1994

Arrived Tan Sohn Nhut Airport last night. It was dark by the time we traveled into Saigon—Ho Chi Minh City—to our hotel, so we couldn't see much except wildly busy traffic. At the hotel the power went off almost immediately and we were plunged into suffocating heat and darkness. We slept anyway.

Today we went to Cu Chi, where the Americans had a large base and hospital. Lily Adams worked there as a nurse in 1969-70, the year I was deciding whether or not to go to class during the strike. She talked of roaches so big they called them nurse-eaters, of sexual harassment by officers, of the love and admiration she had for the grunts. I asked our guide where was the American hospital. He pretended, I think, not to understand me at first. When I insisted, he pointed the direction to a Vietnamese hospital. I asked him didn't the Americans have a base here, and he made a flat out gesture with his hands, saying, "American base is no more. Destroyed." It was clear that I was asking about the enemy. Interesting that the enemy is America, not the South Vietnamese or the Republican army.

I understand more as we go to the museum celebrating the famous tunnels. Amidst photos of Ho Chi Minh that look like shrines and a huge lighted map of the tunnel system, we are shown a film about the war. We learn of the "merciless Americans" who bombed women, children, chickens and ducks, pots and pans, statues of Buddha. We learn of the heroic Vietnamese who built the tunnel system, then disguised their scent from American dogs by eating American food and using American soap. We hear names of heroes who got awards for killing more Americans than anyone else.

Then we walk back through woods; clouds cover the sky and it is dark, and we are shown to the entrance to the tunnels. Although the students plunge ahead with a spirit of adventure, some of us adults are silenced by the eerie darkness and the breathless heat. The landscape is haunted; I can feel death and horror. Only once before have I been in a space so marked by human experience that I could feel it: the First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia built by and for slaves. It is hard for me to play the tourist. But I want to explore the tunnels, to see in person the elaborate, three-level system of tunnels and rooms all the way out to the Saigon River. People lived there, underground. There were meeting rooms and hospitals and kitchens. Whenever there were bombs, the Viet Cong could move deeper to safety. Special tunnels were built right under the U.S. base.

It is no wonder the Americans felt as if the enemy just appeared and vanished without warning. And no wonder that they never knew who the enemy was. I learn from memoirs, not this government museum, that many South Vietnamese were coerced into assisting the Viet Cong whether they wanted to or not. Thus they were loyal to the South Vietnamese government during the day and

to the Viet Cong during the night. If they didn't comply, they were imprisoned, beaten, fired from their jobs; their families were threatened, even tortured. I go into only one claustrophobic tunnel; that is enough. Nor do I try out the AK47s and M16s at the shooting range as some of our students do.

May 17, 1969, exactly 25 years before our visit to Cu Chi, Dominick Yezzo wrote in his combat diary:

"I write now in the most bitter and frightened state of my Vietnamese tour. Two nights ago on the fifteenth of May we got hit. The bunker adjoining mine received a direct round by a delayed fuse 107-mm rocket. It took a young man's life. Snuffed out just as quickly as it takes to say it. Melvin Cowdell is dead. Dead! Miraculously no one else in the bunker was hurt badly.

The same thing could happen to any one of us and its got us all going. I'm so awfully afraid of dying. I want to go home—away from all this."

The students on my trip who now fire the guns with glee weren't born when Yezzo wrote that. I was worrying that I hadn't been invited to the senior prom.

May 18th.

A boat ride on the Mekong Delta—the floating market, about as exotic as you could ever expect from Vietnam. Busy, hot, funky. For us, unlike for American soldiers in the war, it is exotic only in a pleasant way and we laugh and joke and sip coconut milk without fear. We are taken to tour Orchard Island, a lush oasis of peace and prosperity. We walk past houses tucked among fruit trees to a table in the shade and are served jackfruit and pineapple, banana and rambutan and sapardillo. All are sweet and delicious—a feast. It is like being on vacation at a Caribbean resort. Still, it is the Mekong Delta, and the name sends shivers even in this heat.

May 19th. Ho Chi Minh's birthday, Vung Tau

Religion seems to dominate the country, and we will see many pagodas and temples. We saw the fabulous Cao Dai Temple already, and today we visit Phat Nam Pagoda—the Pagoda of the Reclining Buddha. A huge, reddish reclining Buddha behind two standing Buddhas.

Helen, who is Taiwanese, shows some of us how to pray. We light incense outside then bring it in to the Buddha. With bare feet and hands in prayer position, holding the incense, we bow three times to the Buddha. A monk rings the gong for each bow. Then we place the incense—three each in three jars, the others as we please. I pray for peace and love and beauty.

Next, a long bus ride from Vung Tau to Dalat. The problem of finding a toilet in the day is troubling. Fortunately it is so hot we mostly sweat out our liquid. Bathrooms will become an increasing problem for us, until we convince our guide that we prefer to go outside as the Vietnamese do. Not until I get home do I read Tim O'Brien's account of a night spent in the town toilet, the shit field, in pouring rain, under fire, or Bruce Wiegler's poem about cleaning the latrines, "Burning Shit at An Khe." We have little to complain of.

May 20th. Dalat

We visit the Valley of Love, a theme park for tourists. And we go to the market, where one can buy anything—freshly butchered meat, dried fish and shrimp and seafood of all kinds, beans, rice, sugar, flour, noodles, avocado, green oranges, mangoes, incense. Really an astonishing array, and each merchant seems to have huge amounts of her wares. It's hard to imagine that people go hungry here. But I see women begging while we are at dinner and others selling old chewing gum for as much money as they can get. Montagnards peddle their needlework on bony arms.

It is said that during the war both sides tacitly agreed not to bomb or destroy Dalat because it was such a lovely vacation spot. What kind of a war is it that allows such a decision? If you are humane enough, or if you care about beauty or civility enough, to make that choice, why can you not decide that the entire country is too beautiful to defoliate, bomb, destroy?

I am too naive to wonder, and our guide doesn't bring up, what happened in Dalat during the "American War." But when I return home I discover that on May 30, 1966, almost 28 years to the day we cavorted in the Valley of Love, a monk set himself on fire in the main pagoda in Dalat and a young girl did the same somewhere else in the city, to protest government and U.S. policies. Had I known this when I was in college, I would certainly have taken the day off classes to protest my country's involvement in this brutal conflict. Had I known this while I was in Dalat, I would have gone to pray there.

May 22nd. Danang

So far I like this city best. Population about 450,000, bustling, friendly. It was the site of one of the largest U.S. military encampments. Marines landed nearby to support and secure the ground troops. According to Le Ly Hayslip there was also a POW interrogation/torture place nearby, run by the Republican National Army. But as usual our guide doesn't tell us anything about this. Nor does he take us to the pagodas where dissidents were driven and then attacked in May, 1966, in four hours of fighting. He doesn't tell us about the 5000 Buddhists who went on a hunger strike in Saigon as a result of this event.

Instead we see the Cham Museum, home of many beautiful, Hindu-influenced sculptures created long ago. The Vietnamese are a deeply religious people. Pagodas, temples, churches, and shrines blossom all through the landscape.

May 23rd.

Yesterday we swam at China Beach. It was a beautiful beach with a hotel on one side and a piazza where one could have a beer or a cup of tea and watch the swimmers. A beautiful seaside resort with teenagers playing a game in the water and parents watching languidly. The name pulled at me, but I saw no specters here as I had in Cu Chi. None, that is, until I browsed in the ubiquitous souvenir shops and saw bullets, grenades, and other paraphernalia of war. One shop had a

huge bunch of dogtags on a chain selling for \$10 apiece. Chilling. They were probably fakes, I was told, just like the so-called marble statues and the fake Zippo lighters. But somehow I didn't want to buy souvenirs there. I worry about American men still missing in action.

May 24th. Hue

This is the hottest place we've been and the air conditioning works only during the night. Even the cold water runs hot. We sit in our rooms and sweat and think of the American soldiers far from home.

Today we had a beautiful long boat ride on the Perfume River to Linh Mu Pagoda and Ming Mang Mausoleum. The settings were so lovely, especially the care taken in gardening. Not that it looked manicured, but the bushes seemed subtly shaped, just the right size and color flower growing against a gray rock. A perfect garden for contemplating. Again we are in a city on anniversaries that go unremarked—May 26, 1966, Buddhist students sacked and burned the American cultural center and library in Hue. They went on a hunger strike, and two monks cut their chests and wrote a message in blood to President Johnson. Three days later Thanh Quang, a 55 year old Buddhist nun, poured five gallons of gasoline over her head and lit it with a match. She is reported to have sat stolidly for nine seconds before collapsing. How does the reporter know? Did he observe this with the presence of mind to check his watch? I wish I had gone to the spot to honor her spirit.

Driving through Hoi An I notice a man carrying a small boy on a bicycle. The man has only a stump for a leg, but he places the stump on the bicycle seat and uses the bike as a second leg. He seems cheerful and well able to manipulate whatever he needs, carrying the boy and a net bag of vegetables and rice with ease. I wonder how many weeks or months, even years, of savings went into the purchase of that bicycle, and how much anguish into learning to use it. I do not have to wonder how he lost his leg, as I do not have to wonder about the legless man in Dalat who propelled himself on a skateboard. I've heard of toe-poppers and bouncing Betty's; I know that over 88,000 Vietnamese lost limbs during the War (Hughes, 229).

May 26th, our last day "in country"

This morning we saw the War Crimes Museum, recently renamed from the American War Crimes Museum, presumably so as not to offend potential investors. It is filled with accounts and photos of atrocities perpetrated by the Americans during the war. No doubt they were all true—in fact most of the photographs were taken by American journalists—and very disturbing. What they show is exactly why so many Americans were protesting the war. But I also know that there were plenty of horrors on all sides, and to see how the government has conveniently made what was a civil war into a war to throw out American imperialists seems an unfair representation. It is a lesson on how the winner gets to write the history books.

But visions of war are not the most of what I take home from Vietnam. I remember it as the country of the

Perfume River, tiny red flowers on delicate branches, bougainvillea cascading down barbed wire, small boats poled through dusky water. Waterfalls, floating cities, children playing half-naked in the water, riding water buffalo in the paddies. Old women with betel-blackened teeth. Market baskets piled high with dried shrimp, beans, golden rice, dried fish you can't identify. Smiles you can't always read. Snakes in jars, alive or dead, pickled. Men and women carrying impossible loads balanced on long poles across their shoulders. Glossy government magazines pushing foreign investment. Corpulent Taiwanese businessmen at their ease in night-clubs on Tu Do Street. Korean tourguides hustling their countrymen in and out of buses and airplanes. This is the Vietnam of today, the Vietnam I remember, not the Vietnam of helicopters, napalm, machine guns.

Evac hospitals, LZs, colored flares, the sounds of war—these live on in memory alone, with only the occasional bullet-pocked building to evoke them. The deepest scars of war are scars in the soul. You see it in the eyes of the old ones squatting in doorways, in the anxious hurry of women at the market. At home, you hear it in the images of the soldier/poets and in the stories of friends like Bill, who woke up one mid-night having shoved his bed half-way across the room, finding himself kneeling by it, rifle poised. Like my doctor, daily pushing his way through sluggish Agent-Orange limbs, proudly refusing government assistance. The Vietnam of the war lives in the chilled bodies of the nearly 20,000 veterans homeless on the streets of New York City and in the nightmares of men and women all over the world.

This trip to a foreign country has made me revisit my inner landscape of youth. To me the '60s, that chaotic time of Civil Rights marches and peace demonstrations, the Cuban missile crisis and Earth Day, brought the consciousness forever home that all life is moral, all decisions must be viewed in a larger context, we all are participants in a huge moral drama, whether we want to be or not. Each one of us is responsible to the other, strangers and friends, and for what our government does in our names. Thus I feel it my duty, no matter how exhausting or horrifying or disillusioning, to be alert, to pay attention and participate actively in public affairs, to judge each new dilemma within its own context, to think what residue it will leave thirty, one hundred years down the river. Although I know for sure we should never have been in Southeast Asia, I still don't know for certain that some wars don't have to be fought. And Vietnam has shown me that faith, beauty, and love are possible after war. I wonder whether all life isn't just flux and change, conflict and resolution, each day a blind, hopeful groping for balance, for peace, or at least for a temporary truce.

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POETRY by ALVAH K. HOWE

DOCUMENT SPECIALIST

I watch the crescent of her face as my eyes
 fall and rise from the make-work on my desk.
 Her dark hair slides down, eclipsing the hollow
 of her cheek, until she flicks it back with
 a gesture of impatience.

Jacqueline is nineteen.

Seriousness is not an affectation. She is Chinese
 in the esophagus of Vietnam, her six languages
 an intuition of uncertainty. Even this war will end.
 She bends over the manuscript, the spoil of battle,
 a muddy cahier of thirty pages, weeded from earth,
 carrying the odor of cordite. Fingernails prod
 at the words, delicate flesh skims over brown page,
 the ridges of her fingertips rest on the mud.

Outside the ground quakes, the B-52s unload
 themselves. We ignore their momentary fall.

She raises her head, work done, bundles it up.
 Minutes later it slides uneasily onto my desk.
 Sure of her work, I take it up. Captured enemy
 document: lists of names, days of rations,
 rounds of ammunition, type of gun. Meager warfare.

I make a show of checking copied dates, notes
 to typists. But I am thinking only of the dirty
 package, the man who died writing it,
 the ones who died to bring it to my desk.
 What insight can it give to justify lost years,
 lost bodily fluids, lost illusions?

I stroke

the scales of mud with my short fingernail,
 examine the dried earth, ponder its weight.
 But, as a sharp flake breaks off, an intuition
 suddenly rears and swallows me. I hold in hand
 the blood of my enemy; the whole notebook
 has been soaked in the remains of a human life.
 This shard of hemoglobin shakes my obstinate
 innocence. Far away a body and a brain have
 decomposed into slime, body count, uncertain kin.
 This book, these thirty, thirsty pages, are now
 as remote from him who wrote them as any
 five thousand year old slab of clay from scribe.
 The suddenness of death might scald my hand
 if I should hold it.

I see Jacqueline,
 her head bent to perpetual work, her crescent face
 oblivious of me. Does she know what she has
 delivered to my hand? Can she know?

THE DESIRE FOR FISH

The simple desire for fish will overwhelm us.
*Utmost care must be taken to ensure that
 cadre do not use grenades for fishing.
 Those who disregard this prohibition
 should be strongly punished.*
 The fish do not swim in the straight line of the eye,
 they are not present at the intersection
 of the bullet and the image; they are
 refracted into the freedom of their glide.
 The fish were here before us, they will survive
 our revolution, but without grenades
 how will we succeed in making war?
 And yet the hunger is a real hunger,
 the hunger of men, of cadres, of travellers
 who are as homeless in the jungle as the enemy.
 To the enemy, we, too, are fish; they aim
 at us, they do not realize we are not there:
 we are refracted and become two—the image
 that they seek; the real we, desiring fish.

STONE MEN

I suppose that Callon's fifty now,
 a fat, sassy grandfather, still married
 to that Sheila he never talked about
 in crowds, but one time shyly showed
 her picture when we were alone.
 Hard to picture him pot-bellied,
 that lean-bodied flatlander with
 blond crewcut, buck teeth, glasses,
 basketball hard but without heighth.

I remember a cool, mid-winter morning,
 standing the last guard shift,
 having to go into the long, cruel
 barracks by the river to wake
 the sixty sleeping figurines,
 sleeplessness itching my red eyes.
 He'd asked me, please, not to turn
 the light on by his bunk, not
 to crush his eyes in the sudden bright.
 I turned the light on anyway, ready
 to yell in his ear, but stopped.

He lay under mosquito netting,
 clad only in those dyed green
 army boxer shorts, a still effigy,
 like a medieval warrior on a tomb,
 hands at sides, head straight,
 lying above sheet, no blanket, his legs
 and chest as white as Ohio marble,
 the knife edge of his DNA
 pluming itself, dancing in search
 of that fiancée half a world away,
 the visible strut of carrier pigeon
 slicing him away from the December
 dampness of our little river.

And yet, but for fortune, he might
 have been one of those magazine photos,
 modern-day Talos, stripped to waist,
 sandbag-bronzed, sweaty, on some
 Kodachrome highland of the war,
 arms caked with the red earth of night,
 metamorphosed into red sandstone,
 muscles tired from the quivering
 of ground under fire, basted breast
 meat, emotionless, counting the days
 till some R&R Hawaii brought back
 the recollection of that Sheila,
 sandpapering her breast with calloused
 hand on the short interval of calendar
 when he was allowed again to feel.

And now he's fifty, eternal optimist,
 moving slowly ahead like time's cog,
 pale still as Ohio marble, if not so
 hard, waking without unnecessary light.

OFFICER'S WIVES

Officers' wives are more trouble than I want.
 Perhaps the blonde in the blue Triumph
 really cannot get her handbrake loose,
 perhaps she does not merely want a man
 to lean across her as she sits upright
 in the bucket seat, does not expect
 an elbow to push against her breast,
 a hand to reach for balance on her thigh.
 Perhaps she does not have an afternoon to kill,
 a husband away on TDY or in the war.
 Maybe I am reading too much into this appeal.
 I have been back too short a time.
 I have not yet forgiven American women
 for not having to go through the ritual
 of war. My thoughts still center on
 a lost Cleopatra, languid-voiced, mew-eyed,
 walking so straight-toed in her western shoes.
 I lean out of my VW window and say,
 "I know nothing about these foreign makes."

EQUATION OF GUILT

Coming in the back door with the sun behind him
Ray looked like a ghost. It was three years
since we'd met, since he became a second looney
and went to Nam, an engineer leading
patrols through jungles from a matinee nightmare,
a world where men had to cut the seats
out of their trousers (the way St. Louis did
on his ill-starred Crusade) or wear a condom
to keep the river leeches from sucking flesh.
He had brought me a poem—in French—useless
for either of us, except, perhaps, to conceal
the too powerful things he wanted to say.
There had been a man in his command, one
he didn't like, who resisted orders,
fought off discipline. Ray sent him to walk point.
Basic lesson number one—make him do the one thing
he most dislikes. Anyone could see it was a job
he was unsuited for. Bad judgment!
Of course the kid stepped blindly into a booby trap;
his body kept on walking while his legs churned
helplessly in a blender of flesh and metal parts.
Ray held him, vainly waiting for the lagging chopper
to pick up what remained. Now he struggled—
in a foreign language—trying to write out
the equation of guilt. How much responsibility
to the politicians, how much to the Viet Cong,
how much to the man himself for his carelessness,
for not seeing the buried trigger of the mine,
how much to the other men for not intervening?
The algorithm was too much for logic, beyond signs.
He could not resolve the fragments of bone and conscience,
which may be why he'd turned up at my door,
knowing right away that the trip was wasted,
that I could not absolve him, could not resolve the poem.
The algebra of war was beyond anything we'd learned
in school, beyond anything either of us had encountered.
It, too, once wrote a poem in French I could not read.

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POETRY by THERESA A. WILLIAMS

MAPS OF THE HEART

I didn't play at recess anymore, but hid in a bricked
corner of the schoolhouse, pretending to read books.
I had remained green, grown at sharp angles, while
the other girls had ripened, rounded, learned to flash
their teeth and nails. At twelve, my body had
betrayed me.



But, sitting there, bending my spine to hug my knees,
making myself into a kind of fossil child, I couldn't
know then, how little I knew, really, about the
world's betrayals.



There, hidden between the pages of my books, Jack's
letters from the other world, Viet Nam. I studied
them, these maps of my brother's heart his own
hands had made, searched for bruised words,
blistered thoughts, strange growths.



The pages of his letters were thin, veined, like
leaves shed from a perpetual tree. A few of them
had arrived marked with dried red mud; his soiled
fingers had left perfect prints. I studied these,
wondering about the small, fragile world of blood
and skin.



Strange, what dark rocks we pry beneath, searching
for hope. Had not our father survived Japan's sharp
sword to father another child, me? Were there not
good days left for him still, even though by 1969 he
slept on the couch at night, where, wild-eyed, his
senses racing like missiles, he tried and tried to
climb our mother's velvet curtains? Even though,
years later, addicted to Librium and alcohol, he held
knives to all our throats, chased our mother 'round
and 'round the house, a sniper of our very own?



—&—

By day her steady hands baked cookies and cakes—"care packages" she sent to Jack. At night our mother slept alone in the king-sized bed. I have no idea still how many skins she shed there, what forms her body took in her dreams, what she admitted to herself in the dark. She was Shapeshifter, had to be—what else could explain how she took on the appearance of one so reasonable, so sane?



Even now, I don't know what any of it means; the world is no familiar place, never was, is, if anything, more foreign than before. After twenty-five years, thousands pay big bucks to sniff at Woodstock's phantom heels. Jack, dying of cancer of the head and heart, fights for government money. Like those at Woodstock, he remembers, drinking deeply his own memory cocktails, schizophrenic blends.



This year, our father was buried in the Veterans graveyard, full military honors; Jack will be buried there, too. It is, perhaps, the only thing they will ever have in common, not death, but that they both are somehow evidence laid to rest, mistakes erased. Our father was eighty, old enough, some would say, a long life; Jack will be fifty next year, if he lives, no longer young himself. But I think even the old are severed from life too soon, decapitating human memory. Those who were not here will tell us what we gained and how we lived, worse yet, tell our children.



It is twenty-five years later, and I... I am finally round. Experience has fattened my bones, child-bearing pushed my hips out; I don't know what it all means, but if anything makes sense, it's this, a kind of Shakespearean rag, the same old Elizabethan Blues: *The wheel is come full-circle, I am here*, the mother of boys, trying to be reasonable, trying to be sane.

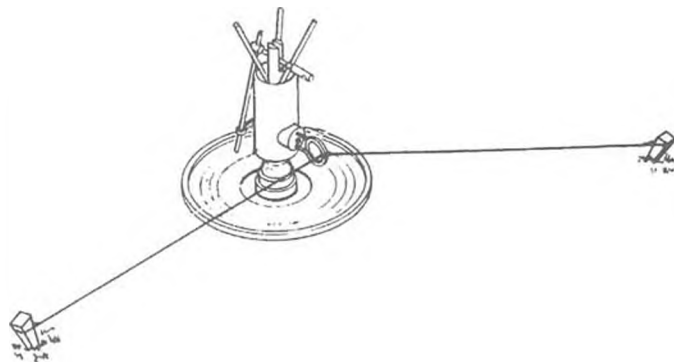


Two sons are nearly men, their cracking voices nearly deep enough to pledge, their feet nearly big enough for boots. The future isn't hopeful; I find no nourishment in it. I function from memory, without apology feed off its breast and scan the news daily, ask myself—what is reasonable? What is sane?



I, a paranoiac I'll admit, heart beating wildly, listen and wait, vigilant. Stand still in the shade of time, watching for rumbles of betrayal, rumbles of war.

Theresa A. Williams, 202 South Church St., Bowling Green, OH 43402.



POETRY by CHARLES SCOTT

Dogs

Tie up all the howling dogs
Lance and Major,
Bubba and Tony,

the long-ribbed and hungry hounds.
No one's coming home from the war.

No hunting
along the frozen river.
No cedar fires.
Silent,
the bell-like voices
of the trackers.

No haloed yellow moon.
No snapping frost.
No smoke

from the chimney
slinking away along the ground
like a whipped cur.

Tie up all the howling dogs.
It's over.

Charles Scott, 218 W. Vine St., Oxford, OH 45056.

THE VIETNAM VETERANS' MEMORIAL

*In memory of Robert J. Kein
killed July 29, 1969, age 20
panel 20W, line 71*

1.

Your house on Sylvan Street was three blocks from mine. Next to it was an empty lot, stone steps rising to high grass and weeds. Kids played their games in its open spaces. When I was young, whistling a tune on the way to school, I told myself there was an invisible house there, real beyond the stairs.

I can't remember your face, except you looked like your brother Steve, who was in the same grad I was. I brought him his books when he was sick, they were heavy as boulders. You were older, I didn't really know you.

One day you left, to go to Vietnam. You climbed a ladder on the edge of a wall. When you pulled it up behind you were gone without a trace, into the invisible house at the top of the stairs.

2.

The grade school boys mass in a choir, the spring recital of the St. Mary's School. They gather behind the doors to the auditorium, waiting until the people are all in. The line goes out the building.

They wait for a signal from the concertmaster. He nods his head once. The younger ones split to the left up the dividing aisle. The older ones, veterans of three shows, march upon the right. They walk to the dark risers that lift them into the air.

The boys keep coming and coming by the dozens, by the legion, marching through the packed hall. You can read their names in the souvenir program, alphabetically by parts. There's a space after every tenth name.

You'd think they'd run out of room on the risers, but there's exactly enough space. Parents are rising to cheer, their boys in the dark gowns stitched to the blue of the school. No record will be made, that's saved for older choirs. Still it's a special night in May, 1968, a sweet spring evening on the cusp of summer. The boys all wear white carnations.

The lines are singing now as they fill the risers. They go to their places and then they stop moving. They're excited but sad, the school year is ending, the top class is leaving, the world is divided. They sing in voices that are mostly unbroken, somber but filled with promise: *Abide with me, fast falls the eventide. The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide.*

3.

A lot's happened since you went away. You were still alive for the moon shot, by nine days. Did you catch the earth, a blue marble with white bands rolling away through space? There's a lot of black out there in the heavens.

Soon after you died, half a million people sick of the war squatted in the numbing rain. They felt their power and they meant to be glad, but their song also mourned the years coming to their painful end, the dampness of wet earth. Choppers took the singers into the shrouded sky.

The Mets won the Series, can you picture that? They play all the games at night, now. You don't have to rise to switch channels on a TV, you can't believe how convenient that is. Records are nearly obsolete, they have a metal side you can cut an hour of music into. Almost everyone has a computer, it's something out of 2001.

You stopped just as the future was starting. We made it, somehow, into the third century. You'd be about forty now, a little more than that. Your life would be half over.

4.

*Is the war across the sea?
Is the war behind the sky?
Have you each and all gone blind:
Is the war inside your mind?¹*

5.

After Saigon fell I would have been happy never to think about Vietnam again. The boys who didn't die came back to become men, guys who could take the fall for the war. They lived somehow in the edge of the frame, a foot and a half from the open door. I saw the hurt guys from the boarding houses, the ones who walked the edges of the town, always on patrol. I could see there was something still gnawed at their bones.

What did they ask you guys to do, in the weeds and high grass at the top of the stairs? What evil games did they put you to? What flash of guns, what playing with fire?

I registered CO when I turned 18 in '72, but was too sad and hurt to take the filing forward. I felt a big shame, not acting on my beliefs when I was supposed to be strong. I went 1A and hoped the draft was finally done. When no one was taken in '74 I tried to forget and move on but that shame was with me beneath the surface a long time. I carried it as baggage, ballast that dragged on me unknowing until I put it down and found it weighed as much as air.

And it came to me to want to see the stone, the black obelisk they built, the one people touched and a light went off in the brain. I knew your name was there among the thousands, the name of a boy from my own

backyard. Maybe their names are on it, those tortured veterans circling out in space. And maybe my name, with the other hundred million of the hurt and puzzled, is written there too.

6.

They called a retreat for the eighth grade boys, in the same place we'd sung of darkness and faith. They brought in a priest from the outside world. He asked us if we knew the lines from a song. *Reach out in the darkness, reach out in the darkness.* The chaplain had the class shut its eyes and hold out its arms in the blackness in front of us. It was a hot, wet morning on the other side of summer, early June of '68. The padre meant it to be hopeful, but we were graduating with our eyes tight shut, fumbling into space. *Reach out in the darkness, and you may find a friend.*²

7.

I count down the lines and I find you, there in your new home town. My face, sad and hurt, looks back at me from the wall. In the dark reflection I see what you'd look like now, in the lines of my own face being cut into middle age, in the face of my brother who looks like me, in all the survivors and all of the brothers. The sadness is so great it hits like dry heaves. I offer you the grief I didn't know I had, the healing you can give but cannot share.

I listen for a moment. The dead are singing now, a choir with no leader, a voice without form. Shrouded tenors are on the left, basses hum on the low panels to the

right. Baritones by the thousands are listed in the middle. I can't make out the tune, though I run my finger down the grooves, though I strain to understand.

If you could hear I'd sing to you back what you share with me.

8.

We lost too much. There are too many names on the tablets they made, too many broken commandments. You won't come down from the top of the stairs, not ever again.

I miss you guys. You're a part of me I didn't know was gone. I want you back mowing lawns on summer afternoons, painting trim and whistling. I want to see you on the hot dog lines at Shea. You've got two kids behind you, a boy and a girl. The girl looks like her mother who I loved in tenth grade, those same blue eyes. The boy lends a hand with the yard work.

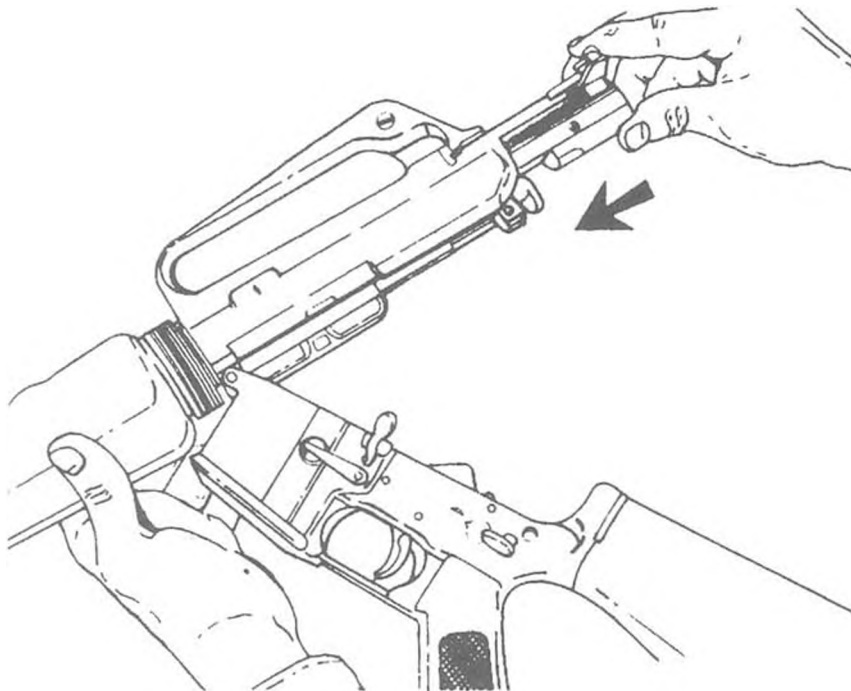
Give me a brush and I'd stand on the rungs, the ones they climb to trace out the names, I'd help you throw white on the face of that darkness.

NOTES

¹ Lines from "No Man Can Find the War" (Tim Buckley) ©1967, Third Story Music.

² Lines from "Reach out in the Darkness" (Jim Post) ©1967, Lowery Music Co., Atlanta, GA.

Mark Fogarty, 345 Stuyvesant Ave., Lyndhurst, NJ 07071.



BECOMING THE OTHER

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Recently, I rediscovered my admiration for those writers whose works reveal most profoundly the far reaches of sympathetic imagination. These are the writers we must turn to in order to challenge the narrow set of prejudices that we bring to the business of living. To feel our way into the experience of the *not-me* awakens and informs the humane spirit that we value in ourselves and others and hope to nourish in our students. Two recent events in my reading life, pivoted around a long-awaited trip to the theater, left me once again in awe of those writers who can take us on such journeys.

We returned from a Saturday matinee of *Miss Saigon* at the Kennedy Center with mixed feelings. "It's not as good as *Les Mis*," my wife said, "but it's much better than most of what we've seen lately." I had to agree, though the characters and story line were not much more than a spectacle-wrapped bundle of clichés presented through undistinguished songs. I was pleased by the unhappy ending. At least the authors hadn't sold out completely in their attempt to sentimentalize a Viet Nam war love affair. Not everyone could live happily ever after. Kim's suicide ensured that Chris and his American wife would take the responsibility for raising Chris' love-child, but a suicide is no happy ending. And Kim's life as a Bangkok prostitute could not nourish her dreams for her half-breed son—her child of the dust.

In easy ways, the play makes some points about cultural difference and the need for compassionate understanding. Also, it shows how the tawdrier aspects of American material(istic) culture infect other peoples and places. It suggests that we have some responsibility for others, but it leaves them distinctly *others* and outside of ourselves. At its core *Miss Saigon* is more manipulative than moral. In its bar and brothel evocations, it exploits exploitation and titillates under cover of exposing.

I had bought the tickets months earlier, and I had no way of knowing that some days before July 30 I would finally begin reading Robert Olen Butler's short story collection *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*. I had bought the book soon after it had come out in 1992 and before it was announced as the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. As a student of the literature of the Viet Nam war, I was already familiar with several of Butler's novels. He had competently portrayed Vietnamese characters before, but they seemed to live in their fictions quite conventionally as individualized types sketched by a capable craftsman whose interest was elsewhere. (Incidentally, key plot lines of Butler's *On Distant Ground* have strong echoes in *Miss Saigon*.) The people in these short stories, however, came to life in a much more powerful way. Butler's imagination had pulled him far into the personal, social, geographical, cultural and historical worlds of these Vietnamese refugees. He had found the range of voices needed to let these men and women narrate their tales of dislocation, difference, accommoda-

tion, and acculturation. One remembers a young Ho Chi Minh in his dreams; another is the owner of a shoe once belonging to John Lennon; yet another has won a vacation trip on *Let's Make a Deal*. Citizens of Lake Charles, Louisiana, or the Versailles neighborhood near New Orleans, they speak the haunted English of layered selves. To give them life, Butler had to become the other.

Of course, to some extent so had the actors in *Miss Saigon*. Strangely, none of the principals in this production was Vietnamese. The playbill biographies told of three Japanese Americans, two of whom were born in Hawaii. Another main performer was from Manila. For the audience, their Asian features were sufficiently "other," as was their accented English, whether natural or put on for the show. Skilled as they were, they only embodied the characters and voiced the words of the play's creators, the same gentlemen who had created *Les Miserables*. That time, they were Frenchmen writing about French history and Victor Hugo's French characters. With *Miss Saigon* they had stretched themselves a bit further.

Still, this musical popularization of stereotypical situations posed nothing like the challenge of mind and spirit met by Butler. The contrast set me to thinking about the whole business of an author's imaginative participation in the lives of characters with whom his or her own life shares little. I thought of Shakespeare's versatility—of his Othello and Desdemona in particular. I thought of D.H. Lawrence's achievement in portraying the inner lives of women and of Gertrude Stein's brilliant "Melantha." I recalled the many virtuoso performances of Robert Peters in his amazing voice portraits like *Kane* and *Hawker*. I thought of my more naive students' complaints regarding identification and relevance.

Soon enough, I was brought back to my preoccupation with Viet Nam war literature, which has become my surest cure for such complaints, turning over in memory the varied adventures in otherness that involved imagining and appreciating racial and cultural difference in that sizable body of writing. I was back to thinking about my role as a teacher in the humanities and of what I want for my students.

I recalled the fine portraits of two Republic of Vietnam army officers in David Halberstam's *One Very Hot Day*. I remember Phuong, the female character in Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. Phuong is a character whom the reader doesn't really get to know. Greene's rival male characters, Thomas Fowler and Alden Pyle, see in her what each needs to see. Like Viet Nam, Phuong's true self remains a mystery. Greene makes a virtue of limitation in this symbolic representation. I thought of all the lesser writers whose Vietnamese characters were demonized or mythologized or homogenized or otherwise trivialized. These were writers incapable of or at least uninterested in becoming the other. As I remembered and remeasured, I gained new respect for Elizabeth Scarborough's *The Healer's War*, whose several Vietnamese characters were so naturally portrayed that I had taken her achievement for granted. I marveled again at Susan Fromberg Schaffer's fine but limited achievement in *Buffalo Afternoon*: her grand success in "becoming" her

Brooklyn-born male protagonist and imagining his Vietnam experiences and psychic wounds; her aborted portrayal of a young Vietnamese woman who figures early in the novel as an alternate narrator. I thought, too, of achievements more like Butler's: Wayne Karlin's evocation in *Lost Armies* of a Vietnamese community in Southern Maryland and Charlie McDade's Vietnamese refugees innocently threatening the Texas shrimping industry in *The Gulf*.

The power of Butler's achievement persisted. In his tales, the "others" are central. They speak to us and tell us just how *they* see us and to what extent we have been absorbed into them. Butler's Vietnamese Americans brought home to me as much about myself and my own culture as it did about themselves and their native place. Aren't books like these the ones my students need to read?

What allows certain authors to find their way into the other and bring that other back to the rest of us so that we are changed? Is the motivation for such an effort artistic challenge—or something even more profound? As I passed the midpoint in Butler's book, chance further complicated my speculations. A slim volume called *Poems from Captured Documents* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1994) came into my hands.

This book is a bilingual collection of transcriptions and translations made from poems found in the captured journals and notebooks of common soldiers who had been the enemy of American forces in Vietnam. Though found among documents gathered for military intelligence purposes, these poems provide intelligence of a higher order than expected: intelligence of the borderless boundaries of the human heart. Many of them are poems of love, longing, bewilderment, and homesickness: the very themes found in the journals (and compilations of letters home) written by American servicemen. Here is such a poem by Duc Thanh.

On a cold and windy evening I went away.
Please wait for me, Hong.
The swallows return to this place of wind and mist
So I remember our love these past three years.

I remember the path we walked to the river
Where we came together and talked.
We walked that path so often
Our feet carried the river's sand into our village.

Endless and indifferent, the green river flows.
I hope you will wait for me.
I long for the day of my dreams
When North and South are one.

Like the stories in *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*, these poems compellingly voice the essential humanity of the Vietnamese—but in this case the "other" is also the enemy.

Of course, the differences between the two texts are manifold and demand notice. Butler's stories are literary art; these "captured" poems are the writings of people not primarily defined as writers. In his introduction, Bruce Weigl puts it this way: "Although not professional poets, like most Vietnamese, these soldiers wrote poetry. For

anyone growing up in Vietnam, hearing, reading, singing, or writing poetry in either the written or oral tradition is as natural as breathing and practically as essential." (ix) In bringing students to the voice of the other, this distinction is certainly worth exploring, as is the idea of a culture in which poetry flourishes.

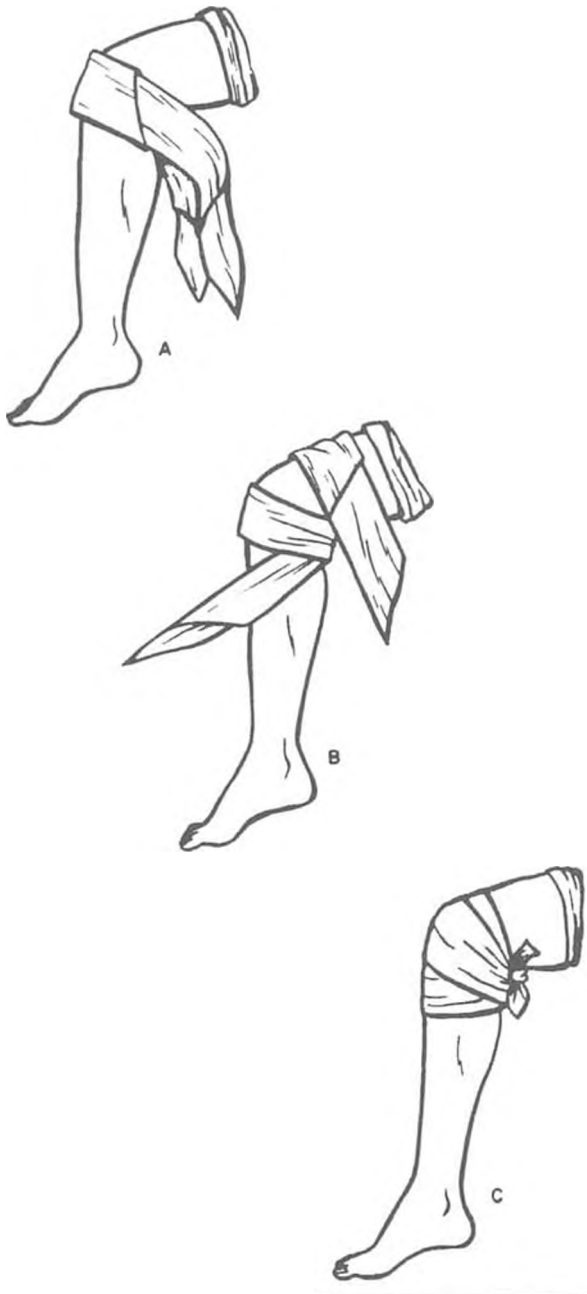
More importantly, we can consider the contrasting means of engagement between a creative act like Butler's and the act of translation. As one of the translators, Weigl brings his credentials as an accomplished American poet who served in Viet Nam and has returned to learn more about the Vietnamese people. His participation in activities of the Joiner Center at the University of Massachusetts brought him into contact with Thanh T. Nguyen, a research associate who is a native speaker of Vietnamese and an accomplished scholar. She became his co-worker in the translation enterprise that, according to Weigl, "changed both of our lives significantly." (xi) The description of their methodology includes Weigl's advanced education in Vietnamese culture. In making these translations, he worked on each jointly produced English draft "as if it were my own and I was revising." (xii) Then Ms. Nguyen would check it against the original and further revisions would follow. Finally, Weigl went to Hanoi to engage the assistance of Vietnamese translators skilled in their nation's poetry. In his own way, then, Weigl too became the other. The success of these translations comes from his respect for the individuals who wrote them, the shared circumstances of living through the war in Viet Nam, and his immersion in Vietnamese culture and its poetics. He has given these former adversaries, most long since dead, an American tongue that is simultaneously his own. While he has not imagined and written these poems quite as Butler has written his characters' stories, both have embarked on journeys of imagination and transformation. Do all translators make such a journey?

As readers, becoming the other is something we do all the time. It is one of the pleasures of reading and one of the reasons for bringing students to literature. But when the author is one of us and the other is from another culture, another language, another world of sensation and sensibility, then it is well that we give special honor to those writers who make the first crossing into that unknown otherness and who enable us to humanize the other, whether enemy or accidental friend. These imaginative acts, growing as they do out of the long hand of war (Butler also served in Viet Nam), are essential acts of healing. We may have no confidence that these acts in words can make the kind of differences that lessen the likelihood of war, but we must behave as if they can. Imagine being separated from a lover who is simultaneously everyone else—all the others—and become one with the unknown author of the following lines:

Although mountains and rivers separate us,
Our love blossoms inside me.
But in the cold winter rain
Our burning hearts die.
Was it a dream,
Or did I lose my way in an angel's garden
And see your lips open into a smile?

Such feelings have little to do with the "isms" that we die for. These are not the sentiments of demons, but of people fundamentally like ourselves. Thanks to Bruce Weigl and Thanh T. Nguyen, we can know this.

Suicide must not be the solution or the final curtain. The dead metaphor of extending one's self has a new life in the act of becoming the other. In so doing, we may very well extend or transcend or complete ourselves. We may take a step towards peace.



Miss Saigon: Alden Pyle and the NATURAL URGE

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Nineteen years after the end of the Viet Nam war, just as at the beginning of U.S. involvement when Graham Greene wrote *The Quiet American* (1955), the extent to which an underlying binary thinking conflicts with progressive political motives in artistic projects about the war is still apparent in the ambivalence within the 1990 hit Broadway musical *Miss Saigon*, by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schonberg—a show which continues to draw huge audiences. This ambivalence becomes clear in a study of the gendered inversion of victimhood within the musical's narrative.

It is fitting that the hero of *Miss Saigon*, Chris Alden, bears Alden Pyle's name. However, Chris Alden is less like the Alden in Greene's *The Quiet American* than Joseph Mankiewicz's Alden Pyle in the movie version (1958; played by Medal of Honor winner Audie Murphy) that distorts the thesis of the U.S.-condemning original. For, despite a liberal bias that made William Safire write a column in the *New York Times* blasting *Miss Saigon's* "myth" that Americans are "self-righteous ideologues" who abandon their allies, in fact the musical is an ideological descendant of the Mankiewicz film. The musical actually perfects Mankiewicz's original inversion of Americans in Viet Nam from invaders to victims. But it is at the same time heir to the patriarchal gender-structure of Greene's novel which may have allowed the inversion to occur in the first place.

The musical opens in Saigon, in April 1975, as a completely Americanized Vietnamese pimp who calls himself "The Engineer" prepares his "bar girls" for that evening's "Miss Saigon" lottery, in which one Marine will win a night in bed with the prostitute who gets the most votes. One of the "girls" is Kim, a virgin from the countryside. Chris Alden, a handsome Marine, is a boy-next-door type, uncomfortable in the brothel; his manner prompts his buddy, John, to buy Kim for Chris. They sleep together and fall in love. The next morning, Chris telephones John and asks him to tell the CO he is not coming in—he is taking all of his leave and will spend every minute with Kim. But Saigon is falling—John warns Chris that he could be left behind. Chris stands firm. He and Kim are "married" in an unofficial Vietnamese ceremony arranged by the other prostitutes. Immediately after the lovers exchange vows, Kim's cousin Thuy, to whom Kim was engaged through an arrangement made by her father, arrives from the country to take her back. She refuses, and Thuy curses her for breaking her father's word. Chris promises to take Kim to America, "a place that still has worth."

Three years later, as The Engineer is released from a re-education camp in Saigon (now Ho Chi Minh City), Thuy (now Commissar in the Vietnamese Army) orders The Engineer to find Kim. In a squalid, crowded room in another part of the city, Kim sings of her belief that Chris will return. Meanwhile, Chris' wife, Ellen, lying in bed

with him in their suburban American bedroom, also sings about how they will never part (both women simultaneously sing, "I'm yours until we die").

The Engineer locates Kim and informs Thuy of her whereabouts. But Kim reveals to Thuy that she has a little boy, Tam, whose father is the American. When Thuy draws a knife and moves quickly toward Tam, Kim shoots Thuy. The Engineer arrives, assesses the situation, and begins engineering a plan of escape to Thailand for Kim, Tam and himself, posing as Tam's uncle. He believes that Tam, being half-American, will be his ticket from the East to New York; he sings to Tam about the wonders of America.

In Act II, five months later in the U.S., at a conference on Amerasian children, John addresses the audience on the responsibility of American Vietnam veterans to their Vietnamese children, while slides of written appeals ("Please help us to help them") and a color film of close-ups of Amerasian children, play above his head and underscore his words, as does the gospel-style music of John's song. After John's presentation, Chris Alden and Ellen come forward, greeting him warmly. John takes Chris aside and tells him that Kim is alive, that she has contacted him, and that Chris has a son. He advises Chris to take Ellen with him to Bangkok.

The following month, in Bangkok, The Engineer is again hustling sex and continues his ode to America. He informs Kim that Chris has arrived. John meets with Kim and attempts to explain that Chris has married, but he fails to puncture her dream of a reunion with her adored American and finally he goes away. Thuy's ghost appears to Kim to remind her of her crime and that the American betrayed her during the fall of Saigon.

In a flashback to April of 1975, Chris tells Kim he can get her aboard an aircraft carrier. But after he leaves her to perform his duties, Kim finds herself barred from entering the U.S. Embassy. The last helicopter lumbers in loudly, picks up a group of Marines and other Americans from the Embassy roof, and leaves Kim among the throng of other Vietnamese still climbing the Embassy walls demanding refuge.

Back in Bangkok in 1978, Ellen sits in her hotel room like an empty suitcase on the bed. Kim knocks on the hotel room door, looking for Chris, and enters. Each gradually realizes who the other is. When it sinks in that Chris is married, Kim slowly overcomes her horror and pain enough to insist that, if both Kim and Tam cannot return to America with Chris, then the American couple must take Tam with them; then she flees. Alone, Ellen sings of a transformation in herself after this confrontation; she feels the need to know more about the war. When John and Chris enter, she is beside herself. Chris tries to explain how he felt in Viet Nam and after his return. Chris' honesty and Ellen's understanding unite the couple and they begin making plans. Stage right, Kim sings about her love, herself, her son. Her song seems to reach Chris and Ellen in the center of the stage; after rejecting courses of action which fall short of Kim's expectations, the two finally sing, "We will do what is right."

Back in the red-light district, The Engineer, believing that Chris and Kim will take him to America, plans his new life and sings excitedly about the American Dream. Marilyn Monroe clones emerge from the wings, dancing in silver bikinis. A white Cadillac convertible driven by a man who, in sunglasses and a white military uniform, looks like a cross between Hunter S. Thompson and Nguyen Cao Ky, descends from the rafters with, in the passenger seat, an Asian Statue of Liberty, dressed as a beauty contestant. The Engineer humps the car. The dream recedes. In the final scene, Kim dresses Tam in a Mickey Mouse shirt and red baseball cap and sends him across the stage to Ellen and Chris. She then shoots herself.

As in the Mankiewicz film, the musical represents the conflict between North Viet Nam and South Viet Nam as a struggle between a cold, unromantic power (Thuy) and an individual (Kim) unwilling and unable to abandon her natural desires—as though the Americanization of South Viet Nam (and capitalistic economic development), were as natural as the sexual urge (here, romantic heterosexual mating). The communists in *Miss Saigon* are represented by dancers in lock-step wearing Mao masks with a red star in the center of his forehead; they lash long, red, whip-like ribbons. A gigantic gold statue of Ho dominates these masses. The soldiers who take orders from Thuy (the communist military machine) behave in mechanical, totalitarian 1984 fashion. In contrast, wanting to be an American is as natural as breathing. "I cannot change what I feel," Kim sings. When Thuy insists, "You can change, you can learn," it is implied that to "learn" to be Vietnamese is to return to a benighted status, to the gray realm of totalitarianism or to a feudal life in the rice paddies. After Westernization, South Viet Nam can never return to traditional Vietnamese culture; Kim cannot "honor [her] father's vows." North Viet Nam and South Viet Nam can never reunite after South Viet Nam has had a taste of America (Chris).

Similarly, when The Engineer, upon being released from the re-education camp, sings that "Men will always be men" (meaning people will always be people), he is mouthing the philosophy that to be entrepreneurial is the natural human state. The Engineer—a hip clown—speaks for American values. Kim, too, singing to her child about giving him "a million things" she never owned and about how he will "choose who [he wants] to be," is the Vietnamese/Other as America wants to represent Others. Like Georgia Moll's Phuong in the film version of *The Quiet American*, Kim naturalizes consumption and "individualization" over Vietnamese values.

Kim believes that, since Chris has come, it means "the gods are forgiving us." Forgiving The Engineer and Kim for sensuality? Forgiving Kim for killing Thuy to defend her child? What are we to believe the Vietnamese guilty of? In any case, implicit here is that the bad things that have happened to the Vietnamese are their own responsibility, and have nothing to do with imperialists; meanwhile, Americans are God's gifts. "Even God wants us together," Kim sings. Her ancestors (she embraces photographs of her mother and father) adore the Ameri-

cans too. "They have watched over me" by making sure the American returns, Kim sings.

While Chris Alden personifies this gift of God—like Audie Murphy—to Viet Nam, Ellen Alden represents the United States today. If Chris is the U.S. past (representing GIs in Viet Nam who went there as emissaries of the old, exceptional U.S., but who returned to a considerable extent psychically damaged), Ellen embodies the beginnings of a long-delayed, conscious consideration of the Vietnamese enemy as human; she is the audience's agent for manufacturing the empathy required for "healing." In this sense, it is the (masculine) Viet Nam veteran's trauma (supplemented by the country's "womanly" pity for him and his new half U.S.-half Viet Nam status) rather than the actual plight of Vietnamese victims of the war that leads to the opening up of America to the Other. The inversion, then, is in place: through two feminine stereotypes—the wife and the prostitute—the American as masculine victim replaces the more genuinely victimized Vietnamese.

As Jane Flax observes, the "propertied, white, male, Western intellectual tradition... produced no self-generated practice of self-interrogation and critique of its racial, class, and gender bias—because they were largely invisible to it."² Largely, but not completely. The aggressor's appropriation of the primary feminine code—subordination—whether in the fiction of British colonialism, Southern racist lore, or American Viet Nam war narratives of the 1980s and 1990s, occurs because of the psychological need to see the self as a sacrificing savior, as life-affirming, or in any case to mask some self-serving aspect of an actual enterprise, whether it is imperialism, segregation, or the enforcement and stabilization of the global capitalist orders³. Such inversions, like the hierarchical dualism in which it originates, are also perhaps, as some writers have proposed, a resistance to ambivalence—that is, to simultaneous desire and disgust. Despite its own masculine (Oedipal) connotations, this theory neatly describes the current post-Vietnam war "crisis," which *Miss Saigon* illustrates: the conflict between the desire to contain history and the desire to open it to relevance.⁴

NOTES

¹ William Safire, "Some Enchanted 'Saigon,'" *The New York Times*, Op-Ed Essay, 2 October 1989.

² Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1990: 141.

³ See H. Bruce Franklin, *M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press) 1993: 129-163 for more on inversions, the reversal of crucial images, and the conscious reversal of history in the reimagining of the war.

⁴ I paraphrase Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge) 1989: 15.

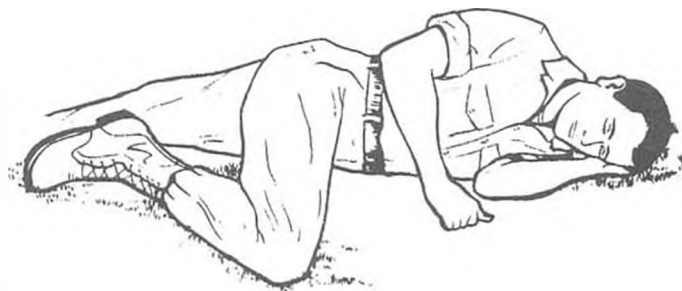
POETRY by CAROL CATANZARITI

Walking Through Rice Fields

Beneath the clear, cool water
the Delta makes love to the seeds.
Their child pushes between them
to carry the song of the harvest
and heartache,
the memory of blood-stained waters
dotted with pointed bamboo and burning reeds,
of soldiers lost in fertile fields.

These new children at my feet
are tender and dance in the breeze.
After ancestral sacrifice,
hope rests with them
to recognize the act that remains,
to rise and reach for the sun.

Carol Catanzariti, PO Box 25988, Honolulu, HI 96825. Carol Catanzariti is a mother, published poet and freelance writer, registered nurse, attorney and one of the Viet Nam generation. Her memories as a nursing student with soldiers fresh from the war beg her for expression and sharing. The experiences of her friends who served as nurses in Viet Nam relentlessly move her. Among her writing credits are poems in *Evergreen Magazine*, *Hapa*, and *Honolulu Poetry on the Buses*, as well as articles in *Colorado Woman*, *New You*, and *The Journal of Legal Medicine*.



POETRY by RON GERMUNDSON

The Fisherman

In the early morning hours before the moon could rest
The fisherman bows before Buddha
In the village of An Long the fisherman's wife heats tea
They touch softly in the shadows
The sweetness of her hair touches all his senses
She whispers a prayer
His boat slides into the water
As it has for his father, and all his ancestors
The boat glides through the moonbeams
His grandfather's voice says, "Fish here"
The nets sink into the deep moon-filled water.

I'm wading through white sand bathed in moonlight
I'm thinking how unreal this place is
One eye is fixed on certain death
The other lost in the mystery and beauty of this place
I cradle in my arms a weapon more powerful
Than anyone back home cares to know
I'm on a mission to find the enemy
But the spirit of this place makes that difficult.

The fisherman's nets weigh heavy with shrimp
He poles his boat through the still water
The smell of fresh shrimp floats on the morning air
The sun breaks slowly over dunes
It lights the village of An Long like a Rembrandt

I'm feeling strange as we move along
Our patrol is caught between the dying moon and the rising sun
An eerie red and blue glow cast across their faces, like war paint
I don't like what I see or feel
My feet weigh heavy in the sand as we climb a giant dune
A wash of faint orange light brushes past its wind-blown crest
I peak over, the blue-green water stretches out before the morning sun
The lieutenant points to someone on the lake
We gather on the ridge
I feel the morning light press against my shoulder
The cool stock of the M-60 rests against my cheek
I'm thinking back to Basic Training target practice
Range 150 yards
He's standing
I look at him in the distance
I see him turn
The early morning sun washes across his shoulder
He's waving his arm
The lieutenant says the gook's got a gun
In the distance the fisherman's voice is carried by the water
His words, "No VC" are lost
Drowned by my order to fire
By my fear
By the power that rages in my hand
Streams of tracers race past him and through him
Skipping off the lake, disappearing into the sky
The boat drifts slowly in the green still water
My finger rests on the hard black trigger
There's no feeling in my finger
There's no feeling anywhere

The boat heavy with shrimp sets low in the still green water
His wife makes tea
The sweet smell of her hair fills the room
She waits for his touch
Buddha waits for his bow.

QUESTIONS

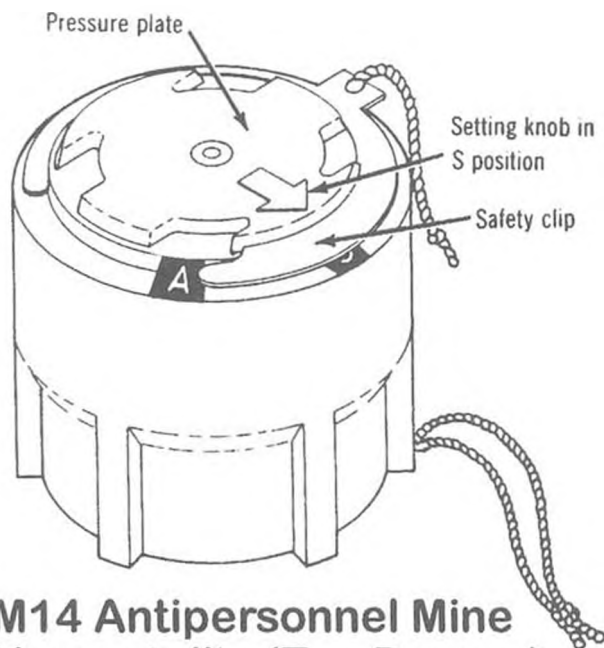
Was it a dream?
 Was it really me there on the beach with Buddha?
 He spoke of the bamboo that bent , forgiving the wind.
 I was a soldier with death tucked in my pack.
 Why did he pick me to cast the nets to the sea?

Was it a dream?
 Standing in the sand dunes,
 Wading through shifting sands, was I in Vietnam?
 Didn't my friends die as the village bell rang and rang?
 Wasn't it Bulldog who became the hero that night?
 Didn't the company medic blindly shoot our own men?
 After all these years, does he remember?

Was it a dream
 When Bulldog ran, crazed with fear, into the paddies.
 Did the priest beads he stole carry a curse?
 What makes a hero? Is it the direction he runs?

Was it a dream
 When the little girl fell?
 Which one of us was her executioner?
 Why did it take twenty years for my tears to fall?
 Why must I be the one to cast the nets?

Ron Germundson, St. Paul, MN.



**M14 Antipersonnel Mine
 Nonmetallic (Toe Popper)**

Sky Front: VIET NAM TAKES TO THE AIR

Alan Farrell, Modern Languages Department, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, VA 23943

Suddenly, in the darkness, the rumble of a jet engine erupts. A howl of turbines, a plume of bright flame rip open the inky night. At the other end of the field, a second beast answers the first, and then another. The airfield awakens now, to this manmade thunder and lightening. (Trans. 1)

Nguyen Dinh Thi's *Sky Front* (*Front du ciel* or *Mat Tran Tren Cao*) is a war story. A plain old vanilla war story, well-told, authentic-sounding, and crafted with all the devices of traditional epic. It belongs to the sub-genre of the flying tale, long limited to the industrial nations, for only they have had the resources to send men up in machines to fight in the sky above the ground front: *Sky Front*. But the Vietnamese—as all of us know who fought them—catch on fast. And so it should not surprise us that hard on the Vietnamese contention for a place among the Aces of the Air should follow a skill in recounting the aerial combat for which they demonstrated the courage and the aptitude.

Yet, the tale of combat in flight comes late into the cycles of battle saga, since it turns on technology, a technology—be it admitted—that is an extension of earlier technologies of swords or fire-arms: the fabrication of Achilles' shield, for instance, reveals an admiration for technology. But that same technology has threatened over time to displace the warrior in both combat and the subsequent tale-telling: in one legend a weeping Orlando the Great rows a skiff dispiritedly out onto the bay to dump a match-lock firearm in the sea, testament that the warrior-caste with its rituals and skills is put at risk by machines which render all men equal in the mêlée.

Roland Barthes speaks, for instance, of a new "mythology of the jet-man...defined," as Barthes has it, "less by his courage than by his weight, his diet, his discipline (temperance, frugality, abstinence)...His inflatable nylon G-suit, his polished helmet, envelop the jet-man in a new skin...it's a veritable race transfer, sanctioned by Science Fiction with its species transfers." (95) This dark foretaste of "future" makes the air combat story so compelling. The pilot's vocation, says Barthes, "is to go beyond movement, to go faster than fast." (94) Flight, he says, borrowing language from psychology, "is a kind of angst translated to the vertical, full of contradictions, confusions, terror, and revulsion; it is no displacement but an internal erosion, a monstrous dread, an irresistible crisis in our relation with the physical." (94)

But this world of ringing steel and roaring turbines is inhabited by human beings. The question is how big they will stand beside their monster craft and who will ultimately resolve issues of battle: the better technician or the better man. The Air Arm has in this Century had

the burden of accommodating novelty and invention with the warrior virtues and of upgrading constantly this novelty and this invention. Future. And what does the Air Force have to do to its warriors to readjust the combatant's state of mind? Barthes identifies the "hagiography," the "monasticism," the "sacerdotal significance" of this New Adam, the "*homme-jet*," whose life is "abstinence from pleasure, communal living, uniform dress," all testifying to a "submission to collective goals...as a sacrifice to the glorious singularity of the human condition." (95) It is a "pact," he concludes, "between power and self-denial." And this ethos would seem to hold for other Men of the Air. Here, for comparison, are the stirring words of the Air Vice-Marshal from Rex Warner's chilling 1941 *Aerodrome* :

Some of you...are still thinking of your parents and your homes... Please put all that out of your minds directly. For good or evil you are yourselves poised for a brief and dazzling flash between two annihilations... 'parenthood,' 'ownership,' 'locality' are the words of those who stick in the mud of the past to form the fresh deposit of the future. And so is 'marriage.' Those words are without wings I do not care to hear an airman use them." (178)

The Air Vice-Marshal goes on to excoriate the "stupidity, ugliness, and servility of ...tradition."

For the young Vietnamese state—actually an *old* Vietnamese state—an Air Force represented nonetheless an avenue toward the future. In fact, the original "adaptor," of Sky Front, Madeleine Riffaud, whose sympathy for the Vietnamese *cause* exceeds my own, alludes in her excellent preface to the difficulty faced by the author-bard himself as he strives to integrate the inevitable technical cant of pilots into the narration in a language—a culture—as of then unacquainted with technology and therefore obliged to fabricate a new vocabulary for this sort of tale as a function of its contact with futurity.

Previously the Vietnamese language had very few terms in Geometry, the Sciences, Physics, Chemistry...and virtually no vocabulary at all for the components of a jet aircraft. [Ho Chi Minh decided on]...the implementation of technical terms derived from old Chinese sources in the Vietnamese; the introduction of popular expressions, born of daily life and work, and the formation of neologisms from Vietnamese roots... The government... minted some thirty thousand words out of Vietnamese traditional usages ...[to make]... possible technical instruction in Vietnamese... to weed out little by little the loan words and foreign terms in favor of words that were 'truly Vietnamese, easy for everyone to understand, and and agreeable to the Vietnamese ear.' (*Préface*)

It might be useful to set the tale of aerial combat over Hanoi into its contemporary literary context. The Vietnamese, of course, had developed a particular endurance to air raids, the leverage of choice it would seem, among American policy makers, and a particular hatred for the pilots of those planes that caused such devastation. Here's how the Vietnamese typically saw such unequal

combat in a short story called *L'épreuve du feu* (*Test of Fire*):

On one side...Shumaker, a pilot trained in all sorts of aerial maneuvers, master of air combat technique, selected to be an astronaut, flying a high performance machine with devastating firepower; on the other side, a simple farmer ...who fights barefoot, protected by nothing but a mound of dirt and some branches for camouflage... At the same instant they must face each other without flinching. But this time Shumaker loses his nerve and the farmer from Quang Binh doesn't. He keeps firing straight at the American jet as it bores in on him. Despite his years of advanced training, Shumaker doesn't pass the Test of Fire...[and the little farmer brings him down.] (*Epreuve*, 12)

Here's another account, from a story called *Les jours et nuits de Con Co* (*Days and Nights at Con Co*) in which there appears a more familiar equality we recognize easily, in first cowboy and then sport metaphor, the essential generic commonality of the air tale:

The group of B-57's comes on in Indian file. The lead aircraft pivots...then passes without dropping its bombs. The second repeats the maneuver. The third? No! He's dropping bombs. 'Fire!'...The shootout continues. The B-57's charge...

The seventh wave of planes flies over...Tu takes off his glasses...He turns to his buddies and asks: 'Hey, guys. How much did the Team from Con Co beat Johnson by in today's game?' 'We outscored 'em one-zip in seven periods.' 'Two-zip' if you count the 'foul shot.' In the AA gunners' slang, a 'foul' is a plane that gets hit but stays in the air and heads back to base... (*Jours*, 24)

The tale itself is modest enough. And familiar. Green pilots join a new squadron, make mistakes battling the "Yankee pirates" in their screaming "Johnson," learn painful lessons but persevere resolutely, then in the end come together in a swelling anthem of dedication to ultimate victory. It rings with the fervor of all the artless, black-and-white hortatory films of our own war years, and if we squint just a bit we can see that smirking Japanese Zero pilot, the one bearing down earthward at 45 degrees in his whistling aircraft transform into a slaving Gringo, that long Yankee nose of his wrinkled in a devilish grimace of monstrous, perverted glee. Here's the portrait of the arch-foe, American (*ptuil*) Colonel Miller:

It's a phi doan, an elite squadron, made up of the best pilots in the American Air Force. Everyone in America knows the name of the colonel who commands it: John Miller, veteran of three wars, 4000 hours flying time, a Jet Ace, who seems to have a sixth sense in combat and about whom his buddies all say: "He doesn't know the meaning of the word fear ." (Trans. 63)

These round-eyed bullies, of course, get theirs in powerful—if rare enough—moments of righteous vengeance, effected through the craft, endurance, and courage of the aroused Vietnamese:

This Johnson, painted a dirty yellow, grows bigger second by second until it fills up the gunsights. Luong squeezes the firing button the way he'd like to grab the throat of the enemy and strangle him to the ground. The red tracers seek out the nose and wing of the long, thin observation craft. Metal and plexiglass explode in every direction. One wing shatters and breaks off. Consumed in flames, trailing smoke, the plane plunges toward the mountaintops.

"He's on fire! He's going down! A parachute!"
(Trans, 9)

The other characters are likewise familiar. We recognize them from the same source and concede that the nature of aircraft and their maintenance and tactical employment probably dictates the same eternal presences in and around them regardless of time or setting. Thuan, the Commander, "quicker to act than he is to talk," who "never flinches and studies all the time." (Trans, 4); old Ngo, the mechanic; Luong the new guy, whose odyssey this tale recounts; Ban, the farmer and one-time *du kich* (guerrilla) who's become flight leader, "diabolical, crafty, dangerous...the arm that tossed grenades has learned to guide the MiG." (Trans, 5); Toan, the impetuous, aggressive pilot, whose slow accession to discipline and teamwork reveal the finer grindings of the leadership apparatus in this young Air Force; Sau, long suffering old timer whose wife lives in the "occupied" South and who dreams of driving out the Yankees and their "puppets" one day; Kai, the political officer, poised, emotionless, fatherly yet distant; who watches the men scuttle out in their flight gear against a relentless enemy in hopeless battle each day. We know these types, *mutatis mutandis*; we've seen them in every flying flick since Dawn Patrol. We might be tempted to criticize a certain woodenness in these actors, though we do well to recall that the novel is only a recent discovery to Vietnamese authors and that Vietnamese culture is a shy, sometimes reticent one.

And it's not just a man's world, nor even a pilot's. The "sky front" is a stage upon which these pilots perform but for an audience, their own people. The pilots are aware that whatever they may accomplish in combat is not the sole, perhaps not the most important of their duties for the nation. Those on the ground who crane their necks to follow the jet trails and arcing tracers across the sky get their due in poignant descriptions, now and again overly seasoned with the zest of too-earnest patriotism: Dao, Luong's sister dutifully subordinates family to her role as citizeness; Thuyen, a self-sacrificing city girl, lugs her bandoleer and rifle to and from work in a machine shop; Coi, a country girl and young friend of Luong's sister summarizes perhaps what the MiG pilots do for the Vietnamese Republic when she asks in awe-struck admiration: "Our planes. Do our own people fly them?" "Who do you think?" laughs Luong. "I thought so, but I wanted to ask you to be sure. That's wonderful! The schoolteacher told us in class that to fly a jet you had to be very big and very strong and that you have to lie down to operate the controls. Dao, you remember that Yankee pilot last May? He must have weighed almost a hundred kilos and he was tall as an orangutang. And to think that

Vietnamese can fly those things, too. It's wonderful!" (Trans, 17) The notion that their own boys could actually go up into that sky to which the Americans seemed to lay claim as their domain, was one the Vietnamese could relish.

Nguyen Dinh Thi has crammed his little book with the predictable scenes of radio chatter, whistling missiles, careening aircraft, and desperate battles. But there is a mood of somber joy that suffuses both the spirit of the actors and the land they defend, about which the author permits himself some lyrical passages:

'When I fly over our own land, I dunno... I only know that it's beautiful. Our country is not vast...But we do have some magnificent sights: high mountains, wide rivers, and the sea. All different. It only takes a few seconds of flying to notice the jagged hills, heaved upward as if by some storm deep in the earth. Or hillsides covered with jungle. Or the fertile delta. Or the rice paddies and red-brown fields, where water sparkles in webs of irrigation ditches. Everywhere, the clear reflection of rivers and streams, meandering, shining with light. Yeah, that's it! Our countryside is filled with light. Our people, too. We may still be poor, there may be lots of things we haven't got, our life may be hard, but the faces of our people are filled with light, a light you can't imagine...'

Swiftly-sketched moments like the following establish an ambience of fatal melancholy before which each of his characters stiffens himself or herself with a steely resolve that it is clearly the objective of the narrator to evoke but not nearly so intrusive as one might suspect before reading:

Outside in the warmth and settling dust of evening, Hanoi is still alive and jostling. The water chestnut bogs, the ponds ringed with mauve-colored swamp grass, all the landscape has sunken into darkness. Electric lights wink on one after the other. Along the shadow-stepped rim of the suburbs, whole blocks of new tenements show off their endless squares of lit windows. (Trans, 45)

And it should no surprise us to discover that amid this dispiriting shadow into which are thrust young men and young women, transcendent moments do occur. Romance may hold particular significance within Asian ethos, but we can recognize the familiar inklings of love aborning:

In this moment, Luong finds Tuyen so beautiful that it takes his breath away. She has that earnest, intelligent face that our young women share. This face seems to shine with sadness, love, anger, and hope, all the dreams of so many lives that have endured separation and suffering, struggling with a courage that no words can describe, generation after long generation. A courage that only we can know, that only we can fully comprehend. (Trans, 47)

The author does not, of course, dare suggest that the Vietnamese MIGs have regained or reclaimed their skies. He knows no one would believe it. He claims only that his people have learned to fight back with the arms of the

intruder and that in their own way, by collective resistance—ground fire, antiaircraft artillery, surface-to-air missiles, and the MIGs—the Vietnamese will as ever in the past exact a price for the intrusion. As a paratrooper who fought the Vietnamese, who respects the industry and courage and endurance of a great nation and who fancies he knows something, too, about the sky, I claim that they have earned the right to tell a war story. And have it heard. And see it take its place beside other greater and lesser tales of love and death and fear and the grandeur of human beings, even in that most tragic of their undertakings. Ultimately the sun sets on the busy airfield, leaving these young pilots to darkness and their thoughts, elegiac moment:

In the distance, the rice paddies and tiny villages hidden behind their bamboo hedges suddenly seem all the more precious to these pilots. The sky front calls them, up into the storm clouds of a sacred struggle, to life—or to death—but for the very existence of their country...We've gathered together all the winds to make a whirlwind. We've evolved techniques of air-to-air combat that belong to us alone. Techniques that have enabled us to stand up to and defeat on our own soil an adversary who is materially stronger than we are. It was the only thing we could do! Perhaps because, over the millennia, our people have always fought this way, for our lives, for our liberty. And so now resistance to aggression has become for us Vietnamese a way of thought, a way of life as natural for us as breath itself. (Trans. 62)

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TWENTY YEARS LATER AND NO CHANGE

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I ask you, before reading this commentary, to estimate the percentage of American servicemen who were killed and wounded in the war in Viet Nam between 1961-1973. The absolute numbers are 57,600 total deaths; 153,300 total wounded.

It is now twenty-one years since we left Viet Nam and suffered the "only" military defeat in our nation's history. In the larger context of the age-old question "Does history teach us any lessons?" one can legitimately ask what contemporaries of the war have learned from their experience in Viet Nam, i.e., how their position on the war has changed after years of reflection. A symposium entitled "Viet Nam Twenty Years After," held at Hampden-Sydney College in September of 1993, suggested an answer to this question, and that answer was not all that satisfying.

This symposium on the Viet Nam War coincided with the twentieth anniversary of American withdrawal from that war and was one of the most impressive symposiums on that topic held anywhere in the country. Among the participants at this symposium were 1) government policy makers W. W. Rostow, scholar and adviser to President Lyndon Baines Johnson; William Colby, intelligence officer and former head of the CIA under President Richard Nixon; General William Westmoreland, Commander-in-Chief in Viet Nam 1964-1968; 2) numerous soldiers from the field including Colonel Charlie Beckwith of Delta Force fame, and Oliver Stone of "Platoon" fame; 3) scholars and journalists, i.e., Morley Safer, Peter Arnett, Stanley Karnow, and Neil Sheehan; and finally, 4) political figures such as Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern. Quite an assemblee! After twenty years of reflection, what have they learned from their experiences? How have their perspectives changed?

While some of the participants in the events in Southeast Asia—General Maxwell Taylor, former Ambassador in Saigon, and Robert McNamara, former Secretary of Defense, have acknowledged that our "involvement [in Viet Nam] had been both a blunder and a lesson," the participants in our symposium seemed to have learned relatively little from the perspective of twenty years. True, there was more congeniality than was evident in the 1960s: some of the former antagonists, e.g., Peter Arnett and General Westmoreland, shook hands and shared a very pleasant breakfast together. In general, civility and good manners were the order of the day. However, this ambiance was apparently more the result of the passage of twenty years, of growing older and becoming less belligerent, than of the softening of positions or a change of minds. It was a kind of reunion of old combatants who had a certain mutual respect for one another, but had not achieved much in the way of greater understanding or open-mindedness.

The participants who more or less represented government policy during Viet Nam—e.g., W. W. Rostow—advocated what they considered to be an ap-

peeling twist on the generally accepted notion that we failed in Viet Nam. While we may have lost the war (we were constantly reminded that we did not lose a single battle in Viet Nam), our policy was nonetheless successful. Why? These men believed that by showing our resolve to fight in Southeast Asia, we achieved our fundamental goal which was to stop the spread of Communism—particularly to Malaya, Singapore, the straits of Malacca and possibly Indonesia. Thus, since Singapore and Indonesia did not become communist, our policy was a success, they say. Even for someone sympathetic to our policy in Viet Nam, it is hard to accept such a conclusion. It seems just as plausible that Singapore did not fall to Communism because by the 1960's Communism was no longer as dynamic a force as it once had been and that the national aspirations of the Chinese and Vietnamese, often in conflict, prevented the spread of Communism throughout the area. It is true that much of Southeast Asia is not under Communist control, but is it because we put troops into Viet Nam? Is it not just as logical to argue that because we put troops in Southeast Asia, the Berlin Wall came down? It should be noted that Communism has been in retreat around the world since 1989, so would things be all that different without our involvement in Viet Nam? I seriously doubt it. What is disturbing to me is that nowhere in their position was there a hint that these policy makers were wrong in their assessments, e.g., an awareness that Viet Nam and China had conflicting ambitions in the region, that the war was certainly as much a civil war as a war of Communist aggression, and that Ho Chi Minh was the closest thing to a national hero that Viet Nam has had in the twentieth century. There was no hint that Communism was not the monolithic force they had argued it was, no hint that they may have been even a little bit wrong!

Similarly, the participants from the other side of the aisle—McGovern and McCarthy—have not softened their positions or attitudes at all. They still espouse the moral high ground—war is evil, especially this war—and thus condemn our policy and actions in Southeast Asia. Sadly, they exhibit little sense of awareness of the complexities of history and the reality that sometimes makes war necessary. They would not acknowledge that the chaos in Cambodia could reasonably be viewed as an example of the “Domino Theory” at work. One of their major complaints is that they (Senators) were deceived by the administration, that the democratic process was undermined. But, was it? As I recall, the Senate had an opportunity to vote on the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and every senator except Morse and Gruening voted for the Resolution. The House voted unanimously for the Resolution. How was the democratic process being undermined? One should bear in mind that up through 1968 the American people basically supported the war effort and at no time during the war did any peace candidate get elected to the House, Senate, or Presidency. Is that not democracy in action? After a chance for years of reflection, the more important question is “Did the anti-war movement give aid and comfort to the enemy?” To this the anti-war people have nothing to say; they simply bristle

at the suggestion. It seems very difficult to refute the proposition, however, that the North Vietnamese did factor the peace movement into their policy decisions and that it did give the enemy aid and comfort and a sense that if they could hold out long enough, America would quit. Apparently, after twenty years, these anti-war advocates are still unwilling to assume *any* responsibility for the failure of the war in Viet Nam, or acknowledge that their opposition to the war may have strengthened the enemy in its resolve.

Perhaps the group at the symposium that learned the least from the war, in terms of their role as players on the stage of history, were the men associated with the media—war correspondents Karnow, Safer, Sheehan and Arnett. As a group, during the war they offered criticism of our policy, of the people responsible for implementing that policy, and of the tactics used to carry out that policy. To a person, they refused to concede that their reporting was in any way biased or had played any role in undermining popular support for the war. In their view, they were simply reporting what was happening. On the one hand, it is certainly legitimate to criticize our policy or do pieces on the war that might have a negative impact on the homefront. However, to claim now that their reporting did not adversely affect American support for the war, or did not provide fuel for the anti-war group, is disingenuous at best. How can these “educated” and “sophisticated” journalists truly believe that their reporting had no message to it? They claimed in the symposium that their stories were only telling the public what it already knew, and thus did not affect public opinion. I personally can attest that the steady stream of depressing news stories coming from Viet Nam, especially after the Tet offensive in 1968, lowered my morale. Why do the story in the first place if it is not going to have an impact? Why does *60 Minutes* discuss government corruption, insecticide on apples, starvation in Somalia, or take up the case of some person claiming innocence on death row if not to effect a change? Why all the coverage of the tragedy in Rwanda, if not in part to stimulate a response? Can you imagine the impact on American morale if the media had used the same approach to report on the disasters at Valley Forge, Antietam, or Pearl Harbor? Such coverage certainly would not have helped in those war efforts. Granted part of the function of the news media is to inform the public. However, they must know that many of their stories damage morale and challenge the validity of government policies. The point here is not to argue the merits of censorship, but to suggest that these journalists should accept responsibility for the type of coverage they provided the public—favorable or unfavorable—concerning the war in Southeast Asia.

This symposium on Viet Nam did foster a sense of cynicism about the ability of participants in important events—those who developed and carried out policy, the anti-war people, and those who covered the events—to achieve perspective and understanding over time. There seems to have been little effort to hear other viewpoints, or to suspend firmly held convictions for even the briefest of moments in order to gain new insight, no sense that a given perspective does not have a monopoly on the truth.

This is also true of a number of my faculty colleagues who were adults during Viet Nam and whose positions for or against the war have not changed in any way. Given half a chance, the intolerance and aggressiveness of their viewpoints quickly surface. If people of intelligence and education have come to no greater insight than was revealed in the symposium, one despairs about the nature of man and his ability to assess the history that he lives through. As a teacher, one can nonetheless be somewhat encouraged because the students attending the symposium were courteous and attentive and were able to visualize our Viet Nam policy in shades of grey. Most major historical issues are in shades of grey, a little right and a little wrong on both sides. Perspective and understanding about one's past seem to be the prerogative of the new generation. But unfortunately that new generation may be no more successful than previous ones in accurately assessing what is going on around them today. However, it may just be that through education and the study of history, we may slowly educate the young and provide the perspective necessary so that they, as a new generation, may be more tolerant and open-minded in assessing issues that confront their society. Now that really would be a lesson from history.

*Answer: Approximately 8,744,000 men and women served in the Viet Nam War 1961-1973. The percentage of total deaths was 0.7 of one percent, and total wounded was 1.7 percent of those who served. In other words, total casualties amount to 2.4% of everyone who served in the theatre of operations. That means that 97.6% of all those who served survived relatively unscathed—physically. Of course, if one just figures infantry—Army and Marines—these figures would be higher. Source: **Special Report: The Army Medical Department.***

Students respond to my question by suggesting a range of 20% killed in action and another 20% wounded. I suspect that many of you made similar estimates. The reader might find it interesting to know that in World War I, 1914-1918, the French had 1,357,000 killed and 4,216,000 wounded, and 537,000 missing in action. This comprises approximately 15% of the total population of France—men, women, and children in 1914. In fact, one-half (50%) of all—that's all—French males between the ages of 20 and 32 died in the Great War.

CANCER YEAR

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Harvey Pekar, author of *American Splendor*, is my hero, and Joyce Brabner is working on a comic book by Cambodian-American teenagers with Viet Nam Generation, Inc. Together they have written a perfect-bound comic book about their struggle with Harvey's chemotherapy. The following is from Joyce's press release for the book:

"You don't have to be a hero to get through, you just gotta keep breathing." — Harvey Pekar/*Our Cancer Year*.

Harvey Pekar had a better than average chance to beat cancer and he took it—kicking, screaming and complaining all the way. Obsessive/compulsive and self-defined by work, he at first refused to take sick leave, then convinced himself he was paralyzed. Or dying. His wife, Joyce Brabner, coaxed, bullied and dragged Harvey through endless—sometimes pointless—doctor visits. A woman with time for others had to manage this "temporary" crisis alone. At least it wasn't AIDS.

As living with or surviving catastrophic illness becomes possible for more and more people, it's time to look past the stories we tell ourselves about inspired and courageous, "exceptional" patients. People with bad attitudes squeak by every day, too, in a world that fails to stop spinning once they've been diagnosed. Worse things than cancer can happen to you, although that's knowledge no one can force upon another, re-learned only when ready.

Our Cancer Year is a practical and unflinching indication of what people can expect when they, or somebody close to them, fights cancer. But, it's also a record of what happened to seven teenagers and two difficult adults as Operation Desert Shield turned into Operation Desert Storm.

In August, 1990 after reluctantly signing a 30 year mortgage for the still-unfinished house Joyce talked him into buying, Harvey nervously packed his collection of books, LPs and papers and worried about his absent wife. Some young Cambodian American refugees she was writing about in Los Angeles had introduced her to visiting Israeli and Palestinian student peace activists at an international conference. Now Joyce was in the Middle East, watching everything the students worked on together unravel. Saddam Hussein was in Kuwait and her last e-mailed letter said something about poison gas and gas masks. As Harvey imagined the worst, a crazy contractor-turned-evangelist decided to save the Pekar/Brabner marriage by upping a \$49.95 roof repair to \$6,000. And, although Harvey tried to ignore it, a lump inside his thigh was thickening.

Joyce made it home in time to watch the Persian Gulf war on TV with Harvey. The battery powered computer and modem she left behind created a link that connected teenagers waiting for SCUD missiles to fall, through Joyce's computer in Cleveland, on to their Cambodian American friends, survivors of the Cambodian-Vietnamese war and Pol Pot's "killing fields."

As Harvey (with Joyce) endures surgery, brutal chemotherapy and daily radiation treatments, we also glimpse their young friends' lives, sharing flashbacks, fears and compassionate support. It becomes very important to keep a simple promise, "When all this is over, we will see each other again."

Illustrator Frank Stack is an award winning professor of art at the University of Missouri. He sometimes signs his comics "Foolbert Sturgeon" and has illustrated stories for Pekar's continuing autobiographical series, *American Splendor*. Stack's own books include *Dorman's Doggie*, *Amazons*, *Dr. Feelgood's Funnies* and *The Further Adventures of Jesus*.

Our Cancer Year, by Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner, Illustrations by Frank Stack, \$17.95 from Four Walls Eight Windows (NY). For more info: 1-212-206-8965 To order: 1-800-626-4848.

Harvey Pekar & Joyce Brabner can be reached at: P.O. Box 18471, Cleveland Hts, OH 44118 or email: ah881@cleveland.freenet.edu.



Author's reply to W.D. Ehrhart's review of *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, by Jonathan Shay, which appeared in the Volume 6, No. 1-2, (1994), of *Vietnam Generation*.

Quite apart from the kind words that W.D. Ehrhart has for Achilles in Vietnam, it is a considerable honor simply to have gotten such close and careful scrutiny from a person of Ehrhart's admirable accomplishments and stature. I have asked Kali Tal for the privilege of responding, because some of his criticisms strike at the central aims of the book. These criticisms can be answered, so I am very glad to have the opportunity to do so.

Ehrhart writes, "So complex and ambitious a book . . . is bound to be flawed, and the closer one looks, the more disturbing those flaws become. Let me turn first to the *Iliad*. . . ."

" . . . Shay is obligated to explain the events of Book 9 [where Agamemnon sends a delegation to Achilles to try to get him back into the fight], . . . for if Achilles' behavior is the result of internal flaws in his character rather than the external forces Shay has identified, . . . at worst one might conclude that the veterans' problems, like Achilles', are also the result of their own flawed characters. Yet Shay neither explains nor even mentions Agamemnon's apology or Achilles' refusal to accept it."

Ehrhart's reading of the scene in Book 9 is certainly not a new one; it has a long history going back at least to the Stoics. This is not, however, the only legitimate reading. Today, a very strong critical tradition points out that Agamemnon's offer is simply more of the same and a confirmation of the humiliation Achilles experienced in Book 1. A readily accessible example can be found in Bernard Knox's Introduction to Robert Fagles' new *Iliad* translation (New York: Viking Penguin, 1990: 48). Knox is Director Emeritus of Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies. He says, "It is a magnificent offer, but there is one thing missing: Agamemnon offers no apology to Achilles, no admission that he was in the wrong. Quite the contrary." Ehrhart damns *Achilles in Vietnam* because it "neither explains nor even mentions Agamemnon's apology or Achilles' refusal to accept it." What apology? A detailed commentary which presents the evidence used by both traditions can be found in the third volume of *The Iliad: A Commentary*, edited by G.S. Kirk, Cambridge University Press, 1993: 71-119. Many scholars see Achilles as "justified" in the terms of his own culture in rejecting Agamemnon's bribe.

Ehrhart's parting shot on the *Iliad* is to employ the seeming precision of line counting to refute my contention that there is an antiwar subtext to the poem. (The quoted lines he counted were merely a selection from a much larger number—possibly Ehrhart was not sufficiently acquainted with the *Iliad* text to have recognized that without being explicitly told.) The antiwar message of the poem is a major theme of Jasper Griffin's *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford U. Press, 1980) and Adam Parry has written that disillusionment with war itself is "possibly the real plot of the second half of the *Iliad*." (Quoted in Kirk, op. cit. Vol III: 102) That Homer sang about and probably for a warrior culture does not preclude him from

using his art to oppose war. Yet on the strength of his limited acquaintance with *Iliad* criticism, Ehrhart adopts a rhetorical posture that the reader would be a sucker to pay attention to *Achilles in Vietnam*, because it reads the *Iliad* as antiwar. It is lamentable that Ehrhart is unaware of alternate legitimate readings of the text, and here again he claims that the one he knows is only one possible.

What is the reader to take from rhetorical moves like the following: "Likewise, he uses phrases such as 'Everyone knows that...' and 'no one questions....,' which any good composition teacher will circle in red pen every time they appear."? Does this not create the appearance that the book is laced with words begging for the red pen? These two locutions each occur only once, both in the same sentence, i.e., "Everyone knows that people debate whether God exists, but no one questions the benevolent character of this possible God if He does exist—questioning His goodness simply does not enter the mind." (Page 147) The context of this bit of purple prose is the argument that the Homeric warriors seemed somewhat better off in that they could freely speak of their gods as cruel, crooked, or heartless, whereas American culture provided a God who was only loving and just, leaving our soldiers spiritually orphaned when shattered by the realities of war. I submit that the reader who consults this single sentence in its context will not see the grounds for Ehrhart's sweeping innuendo: "Is Shay . . . really susceptible to such fundamental errors of argumentation, or is he trying to pull the wool over our eyes? We don't know, but once again, doubts are raised."

Having declared me an untrustworthy interpreter of the *Iliad*, Ehrhart attempts to persuade the reader to doubt everything I say about Vietnam veterans or their experience. ". . . [H]is misuse of the term REMF (rear echelon motherfucker), which did not include, contrary to Shay's definition, 'higher officers and civilian political authorities,' all of which raises doubts about the depth of knowledge Shay brings to the War about which he is writing." Once again Ehrhart asserts that there is only one truth and any deviation from that is absolute and culpable error. It is true that the typical use of "REMF" refers to rear area clerks and the like (such as the protagonist of David Willson's finely written REMF novels), but a number of the men I have worked with applied the term to the higher ups ranging from the brigade commander to the political authorities in Washington. This usage may be idiosyncratic in the group of men I work with, but it is not unheard of, as a glance at lexicons by Gregory R. Clark or Linda Reinberg will show. Apparently when doubts get going in Ehrhart's mind they really roll. He continues: "Those doubts are deepened as the book progresses and we begin to realize we are hearing the same voices over and over again, Though Shay says some 250,000 to 300,000 Vietnam [combat] veterans are suffering from full-blown PTSD, and though he speaks of the 'many' Vietnam veterans he has worked with, those actually quoted in his book are very few." The reference to 250,000 veterans is surely a rhetorical straw man and not a serious methodological criticism. And thanks to the miracle of computer text search, I can confidently say I never boasted of "the many Vietnam

veterans" I have worked with. I have gotten to know fewer than 50 veterans well in the seven years I have worked with them. In the day of managed care and "productivity measures" for doctors, our small, long-term, intensive program has provided me an unusual opportunity to win the trust and learn the stories of the "very few" Vietnam combat veterans of whom Ehrhart complains. Ehrhart is a master of the use of language in the poetry of war, but does that mean that his combat experience is the only valid combat experience, that his use of slang is the only valid use? I have no objection to his feeling that way, but such a posture has no place in a scholarly review. Ehrhart misunderstands the core purposes of the book, and attacks them without good grounds:

This book is my contribution to peace. I hope it will be used extensively in college courses and thereby influence future political decisions. By setting himself up as an authority in the classics and then declaring that I am as untrustworthy as a drunken sea captain, he warns academic readers of *Vietnam Generation* that they risk making fools of themselves in the eyes of their colleagues if they assign this book to their students. The classicists have spoken for themselves, starting with the advance comment on the dust jacket by Harvard's Professor of Classical Greek Literature, Gregory Nagy, and the piece by Sallie R. Goetsch in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* (94.3.21 on-line, and printed, 5.2(1994) pp 162 - 166).

He manages to obscure and confuse one of the major points of the book: that war can ruin good character. The idea that pre-existing character flaws and mental weaknesses are responsible for the human wreckage coming from the Vietnam War is exactly what the book attempts to refute, from beginning to end.

He obscures and misrepresents another objective of the book: to persuade the reader to respect the Vietnam combat veteran, regardless of the reader's posture toward the justice of the war, of the way it was conducted, or toward war as a social institution. Ehrhart reads what I said about the apparently lower rate (meaning number injured per thousand exposed) of lifelong psychological injuries among World War II combat veterans, compared to their sons in Vietnam, as a put-down of Vietnam veterans. I made quite clear that I know that W.W. II data on this does not exist and stated my belief that the rates of severe psychological injury were lower, for reasons related to rotation policy, to leadership culture, to technology, to differing criteria for evacuating psychiatric casualties. Apparently the fact that I believe that anything was different brands me as one of those who hold "the prevailing perception through much of the 1970s, the image of the troubled and broken Vietnam veteran who had failed to handle the rigors of war with the grace and strength of his father's generation, while sources as diverse as MacKinlay Cantor . . . Paul Fussell . . . and Steve Bentley . . . explicitly refutes it, here it is again, in 1994, and coming from someone who ought to know better." Do I make the invidious comparison that Ehrhart accuses me of? He admits that I do not, but instructs the reader not to believe what I say: "Shay pays lip-service to the notion that the veterans of other American wars have also had severe difficulties we now understand to have

been PTSD, writing in his introduction that Achilles' story is 'also the story of many combat veterans, both from Vietnam and from other wars.' But the very title of the book carries an implicit suggestion that Vietnam veterans have had far more difficulty with PTSD than other generations of American soldiers." Does the fact that I have been the psychiatrist for a treatment program for Vietnam combat veterans conceal some disrespect for them that no one else can see? I have written about the men I know. In Ehrhart's eyes this is culpable.

I aim to prevent combat trauma as far as is possible: Ehrhart writes of my policy recommendations, "But wishing does not make it so. Perhaps some of his suggestions might help, but I doubt it. . . . As unusual and interesting as *Achilles in Vietnam* is, finally it is likely to be more useful to those who study and teach the classics than to those who try to prevent and heal the wounds of war." He never addresses the substance of my recommendations, but flicks them aside with a lofty dismissal as wishful thinking and one final repetition of the word "doubt."

There are many laudatory words that can be lifted out of context from Ehrhart's review, but the overall effect is to warn readers off: don't read this book, don't believe anything it says if you read it, and for heaven's sake don't embarrass yourself by assigning it to your students. This is triply painful to me not only because the damning conclusions W.D. Ehrhart draws are ungrounded, and because of the respect I have for him as a poet and author, but also because I believe we share most, if not all major social and ethical commitments. *Achilles in Vietnam* is written by an advocate for these commitments.

Bill Ehrhart replies:

Dear Editor,

Jonathan Shay's reply to my review of *Achilles in Vietnam* (VNG 6:1-2) is overwrought. I never set myself up "as an authority in the classics," nor did I declare that Dr. Shay is "as untrustworthy as a drunken sea captain," nor did I warn "academic readers of *Viet Nam Generation* that they risk making fools of themselves in the eyes of their colleagues if they assign this book to their students." Neither do I think my "combat experience is the only valid combat experience," nor do I misunderstand "the core purposes of the book, and attack them without good grounds."

Indeed, there is a great deal in Dr. Shay's reply that has little bearing on the review which prompted it—including his assertion that I have not addressed the substance of his recommendations—as anyone who reads both the book and the review will readily discover. A bit of history is in order here:

I first met Dr. Shay in December 1993 at a conference at Notre Dame University, at which time and with no prompting from me, he thrust into my hands a publisher's mock-up of his book and bluntly asked me if

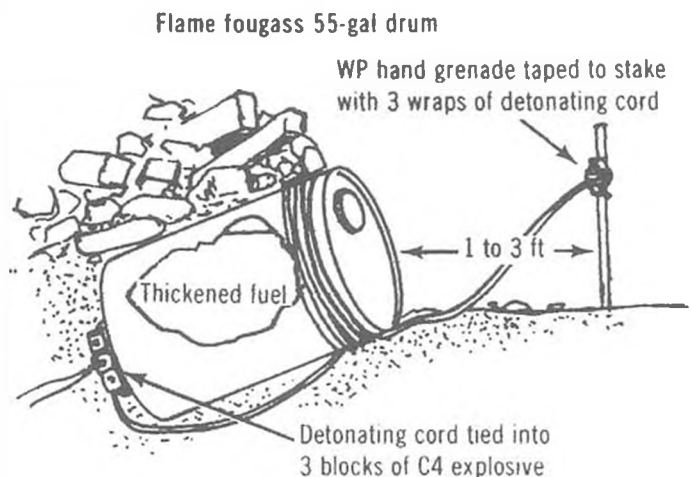
I would review it for *Viet Nam Generation*, telling me how honored he would be if I would do so.

Having done what he insisted I do, I now find that he complains because I have had the temerity to write a review not to his liking. Would he, I wonder, call to public attention that I am "not sufficiently acquainted with the *Iliad* text," that I have a "limited acquaintance with *Iliad* criticism," and that "such a posture has not place in a scholarly review" had I been less critical and more flattering of his book?

I invite interested parties to read his book, to read my review, and then to decide for themselves. And I remind Dr. Shay that it was he who drafted me to review his book, not I who volunteered.

Yours,
W.D. Ehrhart

[**Editor's note:** In W.D. Ehrhart's review, the incorrect reference to Richard Lattimore, rather than Richmond Lattimore, was a typesetting error on the part of *Viet Nam Generation* typist-editor Kali Tal, and did not occur in Ehrhart's original manuscript.]



Achilles in Vietnam, Jonathan Shay.
New York: Atheneum, 1994. 246
pp. ISBN: 0-689-12182-2. \$20.00.

Reviewed by Alan Farrell, POB #37, Hampden-Sydney VA 23943.

Achilles was bound to wash up Vietnam. I did. And later, when I sat for my doctoral examination—I had imprudently, in my fascination for warriors, elected to write about Medieval epic poems and to compare their structure—and ethos—with that of the epics of Antiquity—one of my readers was unkind enough to whisper to me as the board was harumphing its way to a grudging consensus on the plausibility of my thesis, the old French saw: "*comparaison n'est pas raison*." Correlation ain't causation.

Subtitled "Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character," this remarkable volume enlists the skills of a clinician—Shay is an M.D.—and a literary critic—Shay is also a Ph.D.—on the premise that "the experiences of Vietnam combat veterans and the accounts...in Homer's *Iliad* illuminate each other" (39). And in that subtitle we see the counterpoint that will play throughout his text between the highflown and occasionally jargonized abstract discourse of the technician and the ferocious Anglo-Saxon monosyllables of rage-filled former combatants: that good, old-fashioned "undoing" promises a clarity that the inevitably-misconstrued "trauma" belies. The burden of Shay's thesis is double, and I offer it in his own words, for fidelity's sake. First, he asserts that "The moral dimension of trauma destroys virtue, undoes good character" (37). That is: a war of dubious justification authorizes the abandonment of any value system among those who fight it. Next he declares that "the *Iliad* can be legitimately read as a text concerning the human experience of combat" (97). The Greeks have something to say to us.

Dr. Shay juxtaposes—correlation, remember?—passages from the *Iliad*, which he deftly dissects for its linguistic and social cues to the acculturation of suffering and the de-culturation (if there is such a word) through combat, and first-hand accounts apparently retrieved through counseling sessions with his own patients, all traumatized combat veterans of the Vietnam War. He appears to have done the massive classical background work necessary to speak with authority of *thémis*, *aristeia*, *agôioio*, and *philia*, cultural *lieux communs* or thought-clusters from the Greek, which are of course the subject matter of those endless—and endlessly sophisticated—philological notes by which Classicists make their living—and reputation—in journals. He succumbs, alas, to some of the twiddery of that dour but gallant caste of scholar by electing to use the irritating new transliteration—one of several, as I recall it—of the Greek original, so that Achilles (spelled that way in the book's title) comes out "Akhilleus" along with his buddies "Pátroklos," "Lykáôn," and "Diomédès." And as if that weren't enough, he dances back and forth between

spellings and translations for reasons which he exposes not terribly convincingly in an endnote (2. 211), so you do wind up with "Pátroklos" and "Patroclus," "Aias" and "Ajax," "Aineias" and "Aeneas," in annoying alteration. Oh, hell, just innocent vanity, I s'pose, but the artifice has the effect of taking the familiar names out of the realm of popular access and once again into the domain of the classicist. And probably added another \$3-4 to the cost of the book with all the typesetting of those silly ass accents. Reminds me of when the English Departments all decided that Vla-dimir Na-bokov was going to be Vla-dee-mir Na-bo-kov.

This business—surely the product of bad advice from of his classical mentors (that's *méntōrs*)—seems all the more disconcerting—or off-putting—because for a scientist, Shay remains largely free from the excesses of technical language, save in a few rare moments of discussion where he allows himself to be the clinician again and with the occasional coinage, for instance "griefworks," which as far as I can see is merely "grief" writ large. The good doctor finds himself anchored solidly to earth by the earthy and unadorned language of the other warriors of this parallel, a series of tortured Vietnam veterans who recount what we are asked to take as typical "experiences" of "trauma," "mourning," and "berserkery." One can only imagine with what intensity the author himself endured hearing these frenetic accounts of real combat and with what passion and commitment he has responded by composing this marvelous tribute to those men, but I fancy I speak for many of us when I say that I have heard just about enough of this sort of thing: "Fuck it. They're dead. No big fucking deal. Move on. _____'s dead. Fucking _____ fucked up. He's dead. He shouldn't have fucked up. He wouldn't be *fucking dead*" and on and on and on (38). These guys are all, of course, unhinged by their sorrow, the consequence of their durance in Vietnam. Like ain't we all. Hm m m m m m m m m m.

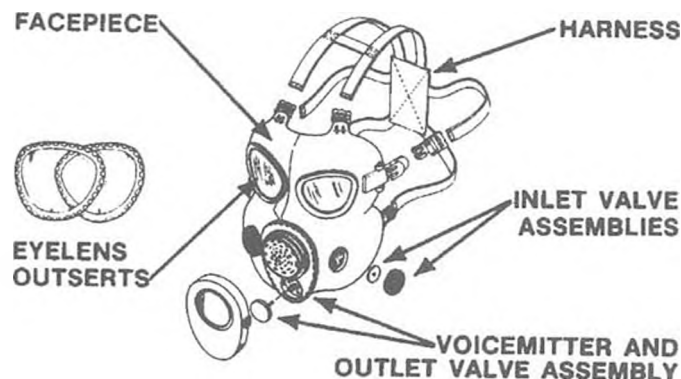
My impression, forgive me, is that a lot of these crybabies are telling the Doc what he wants to hear. That a lot of the stories these guys are citing are bromides and barracks tales of ancient coinage and circulation and that in a good many cases I would suspect such accounts to be amalgams of observed, other-related, even invented experiences lacquered over thinly with a personal gloss and the authenticity of the language—its rhythms, its accents, its lexicon—of the combatant. The doctor himself allows it to show through here and there that he has not been a soldier, surely not an infantry soldier: "clip" for "magazine" is a classic revelatory misuse. But that inexperience in turn leads me to suspect that when these guys embroider fairy tales about the malfunctioning M-16 and fragging incidents and the inevitable massacred innocents of the local village, the Doc is far less likely to be skeptical than he should be. Worse yet, some of his prognostications, like his "griefworks" table of Odin—"special communal meals in honor of the dead" (199)—strike me as more ghoulish than practical and more apt in a warrior society than one of citizen-soldiers like ours. And that's where I think the Doc's magnificent endeavor comes to, if I may, "grief": extending too far the parallels between a proto-modern social order in which, for all its

sophistication and ethical complexity, brutality is a significant—and institutionalized—component. Homer, so far as I can understand, was composing ages after the time he evoked and that with the intent to signal to an enfeebled “modern” age how grand had been the men of times gone by. “Hoiioi nun brotoi eisi,” he maintains with a sneer: “that’s the way men are now.” And more’s the pity. “Wherefore men fight not as they fought in the brave days of old,” as Macauley had it.

I think the Doc, in his admirable compassion for these patients of his, has been manipulated by them. I think the Doc is a good guy with generous instincts. And I think he has some predictable notions about the Army and its role in the modern social structure, notions he lets slip out in a telltale section on “Armies as Creators of Social Power,” where, for instance, he asserts: During the Vietnam War [He does at least give us that capital “w” in “Vietnam War.”], the more elite the unit, the more its training incorporated the psychological techniques of control used on political prisoners” (151) These he calls “techniques of disempowerment and disconnection.” “Like the Homeric gods,” Shay assures us, “power-holders in armies can create situations that destroy good character and drive mortals mad...For humans the most dangerous power...has always been other human beings acting together in a social institution” (153). I’m thinking: “*Comparaison n’est pas raison.*” And I find confirmation of my skepticism in the Doc’s prognosis: “Species-wide ethical rule: Refrain from doing that which causes P[ost] T[raumatic] S[tress] D[isorder] symptoms and character damage” (208). C’mon, Doc!

Let me add that Dr. Shay has chosen for the cover of his excellent volume the famous Larry Burrows photo of wounded Marines on hill 484, upon which is superimposed in some sort of raised hologram, a martial Akhilleus (!) in full panoply. Magnificent image. And a magnificent challenge, brilliantly conceived and boldly—if unevenly and with occasional naiveté—met. A must-read (if I may use the word in its newest avatar) if for no other reason than to brush aside the fugitive objections I have raised here.

***Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character.* Jonathan Shay, M.D., Ph.D. New York: Atheneum, 1994. 246 pp.**



HOTSPUR IN MASSACHUSETTS: THE PROBLEM WITH *Achilles in Vietnam*

Reviewed by Phoebe S. Spinrad, 1620 E. Broad St., #309, Columbus, OH 43203. Dr. Spinrad is an Associate Professor of English at Ohio State University.

On first glance, Jonathan Shay’s *Achilles in Vietnam* would appear to be a welcome cross-disciplinary study that views literature as life and sees an essential human condition replicating itself across geographical and chronological boundaries. And indeed, if the book were a simple literary exercise, it would be fascinating despite its flaws. But according to Dr. Shay’s own statement of purpose, it is not a simple literary exercise: it is a call to “Learn the psychological damage that war does, and work to prevent war. There is no contradiction between hating war and honoring the soldier. Learn *how* war damages the mind and spirit, and work to change those things in military institutions and culture that needlessly create or worsen these injuries.” (Introduction, xxiii) In this impassioned plea, we can begin to see the flaws that undermine the remainder of the book: overgeneralization, overstatement, and internal contradiction. Other flaws, especially a questionable method of using sources, will become apparent as we look further.

Shay begins by assuming that war does indeed “undo character” of those who fight in the war; the phrase appears in his subtitle, in the introductory remarks I cite above, in chapter subheadings (e.g., “War Destroys the Trustworthy Social Order of the Mind,” 32), and in the many generalizations he makes about “combat veterans” from his experiences with a self-selected group of VA mental health patients. He concludes, moreover, that “The social institution of war is a contest of two organized groups, each attempting to exercise tyranny over the other through violence, terror, and threat. In my view, war *always* represents a violation of soldiers’ human rights in which the enemy and the soldiers’ own armies collaborate more or less equally.” (209; emphasis added)

How, then, do we “honor” someone whose character has been undone, or who has been a dupe or collaborator in undoing others? In fact, Shay specifically states, “I will not glorify Vietnam combat veterans by linking them to a prestigious ‘classic.’” (p.xx) Why not? How are we to honor these soldiers if not by honoring them? At any rate, with such an urgent agenda before us, and such an ambitious linking of modern with ancient warfare and literature, we should expect careful scholarship in support of Shay’s thesis. If we do, we will be disappointed.

Beginning on the second page of his introduction, Shay provides a composite narrative drawn from “Vietnam combat veterans with severe PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder],” which goes on for six pages and paints a dismal portrait of violence and paranoia. The effect is staggering. But note the qualification: “Vietnam combat veterans with severe PTSD.” Not only will this distinction be lost later in the discussion—when all combat veterans are described in terms of these severe PTSD cases—but the generic term “combat veterans” turns out to be a

handful of patients with whom Shay has been working in his capacity as psychiatrist for the Boston VA Outpatient Clinic. This is too small a sample from which to draw such generalizations, even about PTSD sufferers, let alone about all combat veterans; furthermore, the composite narrative strengthens the impression that all combat veterans tell essentially the same story. (Elsewhere, he similarly refers in a general way to what "Vietnam narratives reveal," without giving any sources or sample sizes, and without specifying whether these are written narratives or the same reports from his own patients; see especially page 80.)

To strengthen the impression he creates in this composite narrative, Shay then states that "a quarter million [Vietnam veterans] are still suffering *in this manner*." (xix, emphasis added) The phrase "this manner" implies "the same manifestations of PTSD based on the same experiences," and yet Shay is surely aware that not all cases of PTSD follow the same pattern. The phrase, moreover, is footnoted, leading the reader to believe the quarter-million statistic will now be documented; the reader will be wrong. The citation merely says, "The statistics of the Vietnam generation are discussed in Chapter 8." The reader now turns to Chapter 8 for the documentation, and again is disappointed; the only figures given, and only at the beginning of the chapter, are those for numbers of combat participants, casualties, and deaths. The PTSD figures themselves are in Chapter 10—and even here, both the numbers and their sources are questionable and the sources are buried in footnote 4, where all but the most obsessive footnote reader, and one who has access to a copy of Shay's sources at that, will miss the fact that Shay has inflated the statistics he claims to be citing.

Before examining Shay's figures, however, let us return to his generalizations drawn from his own patients. Again, it is important to note that the veterans he quotes are people who have undergone traumatic reactions severe enough to have sought help at a VA facility, and in at least one case (according to the composite narrative) had to be hospitalized because of substance abuse and/or violent behavior. We must also note that because of the lack of identification for these veterans for reasons of confidentiality, it is difficult to know whether one person is reporting the same thing over and over, or whether some or all of the patients are reporting it. Even Shay seems to be confused by this. For example, on page 63, "One man" reports being told by his company commander, "Don't get sad, get even"; on page 81, "several veterans" are now reporting it; and by page 94, "bereaved American soldiers were often urged" the same thing. Out of curiosity, I asked several combat veteran friends of mine whether they had ever heard this phrase, and all of them said they had not, although had heard, as I have, "Don't get *mad*, get even" (which Shay refers to on page 218 as an "appalling aphorism")—and more in the States over trivial matters than in Vietnam.

A more chilling generalization is his contention that the "berserker"—the soldier who feels an animal rage and a godlike invulnerability, and who goes on a rampage of killing and mutilation—never entirely recovers from the

condition; hence the continuing PTSD violent behavior. Two questions should immediately occur to any responsible researcher: 1) How does Shay know this, since by definition his only information comes from those who did not recover? and 2) if "war" and its betrayals and unexpressed grief cause the berserking state, why did only one man out of an entire company of 100, all in the same area and all undergoing the same conditions, succumb to it?

In a typical self-contradiction, moreover, Shay does not seem able to decide whether "berserkers" are admired or feared by their buddies. When he wants to inveigh against war as dehumanizing, he claims that other troops "often volunteer to go on patrols with the berserker" because they "feel safe" with him. (91) However, when he wants to emphasize the persistence of the condition, he reports that "One veteran... remained in that state for two years until his behavior became so extreme that his own men tied him up and took him to the rear," obviously not feeling safe around him at all. (94) Bear in mind that both of these statements come solely from Shay's patients, who may have been giving the stories their own interpretations; and in fact a two-year tour of duty seems highly unlikely, even taking into account a voluntary extension (normally six months or less) to the standard one-year tour, and with the berserking incident occurring during the first month of the original tour. At any rate, we have no reports from the men who served with the patients.

This caution introduces another problem: Shay's apparent failure to verify the accuracy of his patients' stories. (I say "apparent" because although he may have made some effort at verification, he does not mention it in his book.) According to the composite narrative in the introduction, at least one of his patients is paranoid to the point of being convinced that the NVA (North Vietnamese Army, which no longer exists in that form) has infiltrated his present community; another (or the same one) spent \$600 to have his house inspected for spying devices; and still another (or again the same one) hallucinates regularly. Why they should suddenly become clear-headed and trustworthy when recounting their war experiences is a mystery.

B.G. Burkett's recent work in exposing the false atrocity stories of supposed veterans who never served in combat should warn us to be more careful about these matters (see McConnell [1994]). Additionally, Shay indicates that at least some of the narratives he describes took place in group therapy (see page 31), and as anyone who has witnessed communal telling of war stories can attest, participants tend to play one-upmanship in gory details and inflated accounts of their own stress and/or behavior. Again, we need some verification here, especially since Shay seems to accept all the stories as being "typical" of combat veterans.

In lieu of verification, control groups, and other objective measures, Shay implies that his patients are part of a vast body of similar sufferers: "Findings from the *National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS)* ... showed that 35.8 percent of male Vietnam combat veterans met the full American Psychiatric Association diagnostic criteria for PTSD at the time of the study, in the late 1980s.... More than 70 percent of combat veterans

had experienced at least one of the cardinal symptoms ("partial PTSD") at some time in their lives, even if they did not receive the full syndrome diagnosis." *Caveat lector!* Not only are the NVVRS figures questionable, but Shay has misrepresented the 35.8% figure and has invented—or, shall we say, extrapolated—the 70% figure.

According to the NVVRS, only 15.2% of theater veterans (i.e., those serving in the combat zone) suffered from PTSD at the time of the study: the 35.8% figure is for "high warzone stress" troops, as compared with "low to moderate warzone stress," who, despite being in combat, showed a surprisingly low 8.5% rate. (Table IV-1) Shay's footnote for his figures (see page 227), comprising 14 lines of text, does not mention until line 7 that he is using only the high warzone figure, and his statement follows a series of extraneous statistics and citations that will discourage most readers from reaching this point. Furthermore, he continues using the term "combat veterans" throughout his discussion while citing findings for only this small subset of combat veterans (399 out of 1173).

As for the "lifetime partial" figure of 70%, Shay disingenuously states in the same footnote, "This total has to be assembled from the tables cited and should not be confused with the lower figure of 53.4 percent for all veterans who had been in Vietnam, whether they had high combat exposure or not, given in the NVVRS executive summary, R.A. Kulka *et al.* *Trauma and the Vietnam War Generation*, 63." (Footnote lines 10-14) Again, Shay substitutes high warzone figures for combat veteran figures, and further abstracts his material from three discrete tables in the study: III-2-1, III-3-1, and III-4-1. We will look at the three tables in a moment, but for now, let us examine the "executive summary" that Shay mentions.

According to the summary, "lifetime" figures indicate any time in a veteran's life, regardless of when the symptoms occurred. (Theoretically, this could include a week after the combat experience itself.) Using this category, the NVVRS is able to elevate the original 15.2% figure to 30.9%. To achieve the 53.4% figure, the study must add yet another category: "Partial PTSD," or the isolated experience of *any* of the symptoms required for a diagnosis of PTSD.

To understand how greatly such a category might skew the figures, we should know (and Shay gives the full definition in his book, on pages 166-67) that a diagnosis of PTSD is predicated on five major criteria, which must all be present: A) a traumatic stressor event, B) persistent reexperiencing, C) persistent avoidance, and D) increased arousal, with E) a duration of at least one month. Additionally, criteria B, C, and D have subcriteria, of which the patient must have experienced at least three from C and two from D. According to the APA, without these criteria, PTSD cannot be diagnosed. Therefore, there is no such thing as "partial PTSD"; like pneumonia or death, either the patient has it or he does not.

One can only speculate as to why the NVVRS developed this category. (An aid to speculation is that the survey was mandated by Congress in 1983 as a condition for continued funding of VA Vet Centers, in order to determine the need for such facilities. Greater needs

mean greater funding.) And yet, even the 53.4% that includes the questionable category along with genuine PTSD seems not to be high enough for Shay. He once again culls out only the high warzone figures, and additionally attempts a correlation among the three tables on instances of criteria B, C, and D. Unfortunately, the tables do not indicate how many subcriteria have been experienced for the percentages given, nor is there any indication of how many sufferers from one criterion—say, B, where only one experience is required—also suffered from the others—say, C, where three are required. In other words, Shay's "assemblage" is little more than a guess, further diluting the validity of the already questionable figures. And again, only the most persistent footnote reader who has access to the full study will realize this.

Space prevents me from delving more deeply into Shay's figures, the NVVRS findings, and in fact the questionable background of PTSD definitions and treatment as a whole (for the last, see my "Patriotism as Pathology" [1994]). However, it is noteworthy that Shay's selectivity, overstatement, and equivocal attributions extend into his discussion of both Homer and Shakespeare.

At the beginning of Chapter 10, Shay presents a passage from *1 Henry IV*, in which a description of Hotspur seems to indicate that he is suffering from PTSD symptoms. The passage is footnoted, and again the casual reader may assume that the reference will be the usual act, line, and scene citation and so skip the footnote on page 226. This would be a mistake. After the line citations, Shay adds: "This has been effectively used as a teaching text by others, e.g., David Grady's Epilogue in R.A. Kulka *et al.*..." [here follows the full citation for the NVVRS "executive summary" volume]. In actuality, although Shay has not *exactly* lifted the use of the passage from Grady without attribution, his very wording obfuscates whether he got the idea from Grady, Grady got it from him, or both got it from others. And of course the reader who has skipped the footnote will think the use of the Shakespeare passage is yet another example of Shay's own erudition.

Furthermore, regardless of who originated the idea, the passage shows the same selective use of evidence noted before. Hotspur might have symptoms of PTSD, but Hal, Worcester, Northumberland, and Prince John—all of whom have been in combat—do not. And Shakespeare presents Hotspur as an *inadequate* soldier, one who endangers his troops needlessly for his own vainglory, refuses to listen to good advice from his more experienced military advisors, and plots the division of England for his own benefit. He is one of the foils to Hal; he is the man who mistakes personal glory for honor, much as Falstaff, the other foil to Hal, goes to the opposite extreme and wants no part of honor or glory because they are dangerous (but who, interestingly enough, shows no signs of PTSD, either). The only other character in the play who shows any symptoms is King Henry IV; and his problem is not combat but having once overthrown Richard II and been responsible for his murder.

I do not mean to suggest that all veterans with PTSD have criminal backgrounds; but Shay may encourage Shakespeare scholars to think so. That is, a Shakespeare scholar may search the plays for other instances of the symptoms Shay describes, and find them primarily in *Macbeth* and *Richard III*, murderers both—and both with foils (Banquo and Richmond, respectively) who have seen the same amount of combat as the hero/villains, but show have no symptoms of PTSD. One may remember, in particular, the stirring scene at the end of *Richard III* in which Richard and Richmond sleep at opposite sides of the stage before the Battle of Bosworth Field; the ghosts of Richard's victims appear to both of them in dreams, cursing Richard and blessing Richmond, whereupon Richard wakes up hysterical and Richmond wakes up refreshed.

Furthermore, Shay's claim that Judaeo-Christian tradition encourages dehumanizing of the enemy (see Chapter 6) can be refuted by the same play he cites. It is Hotspur, the inadequate soldier, who belittles his opponents; Hal, the hero-king-to-be, praises Hotspur both before and after he kills him in battle. We may also think of other figures in Western history and literature who had the highest respect for the *valor* (as distinguished from the rectitude) of their enemies: Richard I about Saladin, soldiers on both sides of the English and American Civil Wars, fighter pilots in our own twentieth century wars, and too many knights and heroes of legend to list here. However, before a battle (or ball game, for that matter), one does not cheer on one's troops (or players) with the idea that the enemy is impossible to defeat. And oddly enough, Shay seems to confuse contempt for the enemy with a judgment about the wrongness or danger of the enemy. If the enemy is not considered a menace, war becomes an exercise in killing for its own sake.

As a Shakespeare scholar myself, I have obviously concentrated more on Shay's treatment of Shakespeare than on his treatment of the purported subject of his book, that is, the *Iliad*. But even here, Shay demonstrates the same selective reading. Achilles is a high-ranking officer, not the "grunt" [foot soldier] or low-ranking officer Shay draws his parallels with; nor is Achilles a figure of high morality, as Shay claims, but one who goes into an epic sulk when Briseis is taken from him and does not relent—despite the entreaties of other officers that he return to battle—even when Agamemnon apologizes and offers not only to return Briseis but to give Achilles enormous quantities of loot. Furthermore, we cannot tell whether Achilles has a lifetime maladjustment from his berserk episode because he dies shortly after the episode; and other soldiers do not turn berserk as Achilles does, despite equivalent provocation—including the Trojans, who have seen their homes and families attacked. Odysseus, in fact, seems to have benefited from his war experience, as we discover in the *Odyssey*, Homer's sequel to the *Iliad*.

Again, if this book were simply a literary exercise, we might argue harmlessly about the interpretations and use of evidence. But it is not a literary exercise. It is a supposed portrait of all (or at least 70% of) combat veterans, and an instruction on how to view and treat

veterans, both socially and clinically. It does all veterans a disservice, but especially those veterans genuinely suffering from stress reactions to their war experiences. If Shay is to be believed, they are doomed animals—made so by the abstract villain "war," to be sure, but doomed nonetheless. And they need not even show full-blown, diagnosable symptoms of PTSD to be included in the horrors Shay describes; even one vividly painful memory, one loss of temper, one feeling of having been betrayed will do it. Their character has been undone.

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POETRY by MAGGIE JAFFE

VIET NAM VETERANS MEMORIAL, July

Glass & granite monuments in ozone-depleted air.
D.C. power brokers network the System.
Invisible "inner city" rims the White House.
We're put up in a 125 dollar-a-day hotel where I play Solitaire,
stare beyond the opaque-curtained window at
common crows, raucous, electric, alive!
But I can't open the window to hear them.

As tourists the next day, the corporate museum
exhibits minimalist neon on stark white walls.
Near it, an artist's rendition of Brazilian
torture aestheticizes torture . . .
But it's the Memorial I want most to see.

Trudging past the jet-black slab,
Vets hawk POW/MIA "information"
to anyone who'll listen.
Still the dead won't scream, laugh, curse,
fuck, "heal" by one more war.
Nor will they rise, fall, rise, fall
nightly on the 6 o'clock news.
A sudden rain swamps the hollow ground
where sleek crows strut in crow-joy.

That night, instruction about our professional duties
in the former Soviet bloc nation state where we'll be
university lecturers for the next 9 months.
Afterwards, we're served cocktails & hors d'oeuvres:
Maryland crab, N'orleans shrimp, Russian caviar.

Clutching my dry white wine
until the glass beads & sweats,
I think of the Memorial adjacent to Lincoln.
Lincoln, our glorious manic-depressive,
made war a principle of justice.

Cooked

americium-95

When Rosemary got cooked by plutonium
they had to scrub down her skin
with a steel brush & chemical wash.
Karen, this means I got cancer!
Karen made them take
a nasal smear.
This way they'd know
how much she was
cooked.

berkelium-97

Though Rosemary's glovebox
was only fractionally torn,
her rems were way over
the permitted body
burden. Plus she's young
& kind of scrawny
making her more susceptible.
Karen writes this down in
her cribbed, child-like scrawl.

californium-98

In less than two years
Karen's made the union rep,
aches to bust it wide open.
How the Company's shipping cracked
fuel rods to their fast-breeder
up in Hanford.

einsteinium-99

"It's a job, someone's got to do it,
Karen just cunt shut up.
She ought to know that in Oklahoma
McGee & Kerr own your ass.
They own your sorry-assed first born,
if they want it."

fermium-100

That night, Karen works
the graveyard shift, chain-
smoking Kools
tired as shit,
already "married" to it.
At Kerr-McGee
plutonium's something special!

nobelium-102

In the parking lot
her battered white Honda Civic
ticks in November frost . . .

NUKE PORN: I

"Dramatically illustrating the security problems
posed by the rapid growth of the Internet computer
network, one of the three nuclear weapons labs con-
firmed that hackers were using its computers to store
and distribute hard-core porn."

		sheathe	
	lock	load	
thrust		prick	Nevada
rocket	hard	core	
	stimulate	open	moon
		Nagasaki	
suck		Chernobyl	explode
punish		Hiroshima	head
node	snuff	simulate	
		Bikini	
cum	spread	cock	Livermore
	screw	display	
		Utah	

NUKE PORN: II

"He who lies down with dogs,
gets up with fleas."
--Russian proverb

San Diego: Glen James,
a 62-year-old engineer,
is suing San Onofre
Nuclear Power Plant
for allegedly causing his
chronic leukemia.
Evidently, microscopic "fuel fleas"
were released when James
worked at the extremely
volatile construction
site in the mid-80's.
Does he have a claim?
"We think not," said Richard
Rosenblum, VP & spokes-
person for the Company,
"since 30% of all Americans get cancer."

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Viet Nam Generation, Inc. published Maggie's volume of
poetry, **Continuous Performance** in 1992, and will be
publishing a second volume, **How the West Was One**, in
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