

TANGLED MEMORIES

*The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic,
and the Politics of Remembering*

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"The Wall and the Screen Memory"

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Chapter Two

The Wall and the Screen Memory

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial

The forms remembrance takes indicate the status of memory within a given culture. In acts of public commemoration, the shifting discourses of history, personal memory, and cultural memory converge. Public commemoration is a form of history-making, yet it can also be a contested form of remembrance in which cultural memories slide through and into each other, creating a narrative tangle. With the Vietnam War, public commemoration is inextricably tied to the question of how war is brought to closure in American society. How does a society commemorate a war whose central narrative is one of division and dissent, a war whose history is still formative and highly contested? The Vietnam War, with its lack of a singular, historical narrative defining a clear-cut purpose and outcome, has led to a unique form of commemoration.

Questions of public remembrance of the Vietnam War can be examined through the concept of the screen. A screen is a surface that is projected upon; it is also an object that hides something from view, that shelters or protects. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., both shields and is projected upon; the black walls of the memorial act as screens for innumerable projections of memory and history—of the United States' participation in the Vietnam War and of the experiences of Vietnam veterans since the war.

A singular, sanctioned history of the Vietnam War has not yet coa-

lesced, in part because of the disruption of the standard narratives of American imperialism, technology, and masculinity that the war's loss represented. The history of the Vietnam War is still being composed from many conflicting histories, yet two particular elements within the often opposing narratives are uncontested—the divisive effect of the war on American society and the marginalization of Vietnam veterans. In this chapter I analyze how narratives of the war have been constructed out of and within the cultural memory of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. I examine how the walls of the memorial act to eclipse—to screen out—personal and collective memories of the Vietnam War in the design of history and how the textures of cultural memory are nevertheless woven throughout, perhaps over and under, these screens.

The 1980s and 1990s have witnessed a repackaging of the 1960s and the Vietnam War—a phenomenon steeped in the language of nostalgia, healing, and forgiveness. Within this rescripting of history, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial has become a central icon in the process of healing, of confronting difficult past experiences. When it was constructed in 1982, the memorial was the center of a debate over how wars should be remembered and who should be remembered (those who died, those who participated in it, those who engineered it, those who opposed it). The memorial has received an extraordinary amount of attention: it has been the subject of innumerable coffee-table books, several exhibitions, and a television movie, among other things. Virtually all texts written today concerning Vietnam veterans make reference to it. It has played a significant role in the rehistoricization of the Vietnam War.

The Status of a Memorial

Although now administered by the National Park Service of the federal government, the impetus for the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial came from a group of Vietnam veterans who raised the funds and negotiated for a site on the Washington Mall. Situated on the grassy slope of the Constitutional Gardens near the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which was designed by Maya Lin, consists of a V shape of two walls of black granite set into

the earth at an angle of 125 degrees. Together, the walls extend almost five hundred feet, with a maximum height of approximately ten feet at the central hinge. These walls are inscribed with the names of the 58,196 men and women who died in the war, listed chronologically by date of death, with opening and closing inscriptions. The listing of names begins on the right-hand side of the hinge and continues to the end of the right wall; it then begins again at the far end of the left wall and ends at the center again. Thus, the name of the first American soldier killed in Vietnam, in 1959, is on a panel adjacent to that containing the name of the last killed there, in 1975.¹ The framing dates of 1959 and 1975 are the only dates listed on the wall; the names are listed alphabetically within each "casualty day," although those dates are not noted. Each name is preceded by a diamond shape; names of the approximately 1,300 MIAs (those missing in action) are preceded by a small cross, which, in the event that the remains of that person are identified, is changed to a diamond. If an MIA should return alive, this symbol would be changed to a circle (but, as one volunteer at the memorial told me, "We don't have any circles yet"). Eight of the names on the wall represent women who died in the war. Since 1984 the memorial has been accompanied by a figurative sculpture of three soldiers, which faces the memorial from a group of trees south of the wall. In 1993 a statue commemorating the women who served in Vietnam was added three hundred feet from the wall.

The memorial functions in opposition to the codes of remembrance evidenced on the Washington Mall. Virtually all the national memorials and monuments in Washington are made of white stone and designed to be visible from a distance. In contrast, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial cuts into the sloping earth: it is not visible until one is almost upon it; if approached from behind, it seems to disappear into the landscape (see Figure 5). Although the polished black granite walls of the memorial reflect the Washington Monument and face the Lincoln Memorial, they are not visible from the base of either structure. The black stone creates a reflective surface, one that echoes the reflecting pool of the Lincoln Memorial and allows viewers to participate in the memorial; seeing their own image reflected in the names, they are implicated in the listing of the dead. The

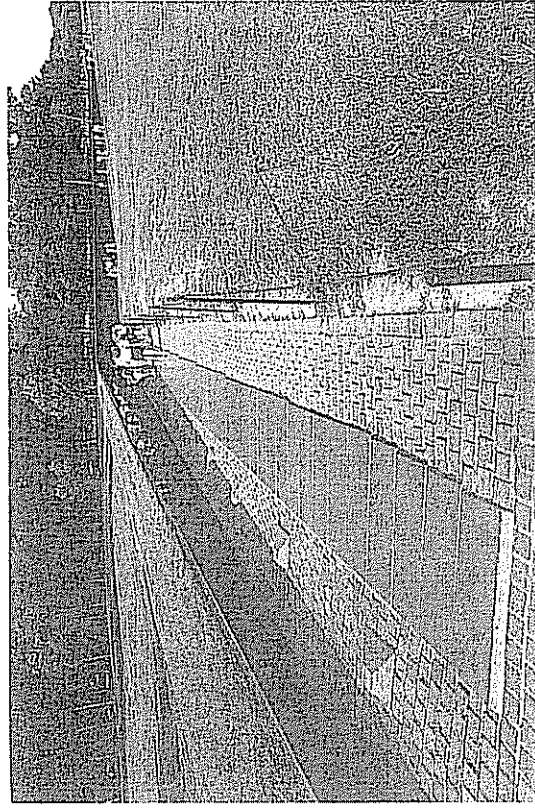


Figure 5. Vietnam Veterans Memorial, by Maya Lin. Photo by the author.

etched surface of the memorial has a tactile quality, and viewers are compelled to touch the names and make rubbings of them.

Its status as a memorial, rather than a monument, situates the Vietnam Veterans Memorial within a particular code of remembrance. Monuments and memorials can often be used as interchangeable forms, but there are distinctions in intent between them. Arthur Danto writes:

We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget. Thus we have the Washington Monument but the Lincoln Memorial. Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends. . . . The memorial is a special precinct, extruded from life, a segregated enclave where we honor the dead. With monuments we honor ourselves.²

Monuments are not generally built to commemorate defeats; the defeated dead are remembered in memorials. Whereas a monument most often signifies victory, a memorial refers to the life or lives sacrificed for a particular set of values. Whatever triumph a memorial may

sculpture. The perfect minimal sculpture is an elemental, even banal, form comprised solely of straight lines and flat planes. . . . As for the veterans, they, like the city fathers of Hartford, will now have a chance to bang their heads with the heels of their hands and make imaginary snowballs and look at their wall. Far from lifting the accusing finger from those who fought in Vietnam—it will be the big forefinger's final perverse prank. A tribute to Jane Fonda!⁶

Wolfe and other critics of modernism compared the memorial to two infamously unpopular government-funded public sculptures: Carl Andre's *Stone Field Piece* (1980) in Hartford, Connecticut, and Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981) in downtown Manhattan. Andre's work, which consists of thirty-six large boulders positioned on a lawn near Hartford's city hall, is widely regarded with derision by residents as a symbol of the misguided judgments of their government.⁷ Serra's now notorious *Tilted Arc*, an oppressive, leaning slab of Cor-Ten steel that bisected the equally inhospitable Federal Plaza, inspired several years of intense debate and was dismantled in March 1989 after workers in the Federal Building petitioned to have it removed.⁸ In the media, these two works came to symbolize the alienating effect of modern sculpture on the viewing public and people's questioning of the mechanisms by which tax-funded sculpture is imposed upon them. The debates surrounding both works centered on whom the "public" of public sculpture comprises and what responsibilities artists have to the communities in which their public art will reside.

Before it was built, the memorial was seen by many veterans and critics of modernism as yet another work of abstract form that the public would find difficult to interpret. Frederick Hart, the sculptor who was chosen to design the realist statue that accompanies the memorial, stated (somewhat condescendingly, one could argue) that figurative art was the only artistic style that was truly public. Sarcastically employing adjectives of modernism, Hart wrote:

The simple, bold, flat, unequivocal truth is that modernism has failed in its utopianist dream of creating a new and universal language. . . . The figure is a necessary element if public art is in any sense to be truly public. The simple fact is that the philosophical arrogance rooted in the concept of "Art for Art's Sake" has led to continuously diminishing levels of substance and meaning in art. Art is now nothing more than a cult, held to the bosom of smug elitists who dictate what is, and is not, fit for public consumption.⁹

refer to, its depiction of victory is always tempered by a foregrounding of the lives lost.

Memorials are, according to Charles Griswold, "a species of pedagogy" that "seeks to instruct posterity about the past and, in so doing, necessarily reaches a decision about what is worth recovering."³ The Lincoln Memorial, for example, is a funereal structure that gauns its force from its implicit reference to Lincoln's untimely death. It embodies the man and his philosophy, with his words inscribed on its walls. The Washington Monument, by contrast, operates purely as a symbol, making no reference beyond its name to the mythic political figure. This distinction between the two outlines one of the fundamental differences between memorials and monuments: Memorials tend to emphasize specific texts or lists of the dead, whereas monuments offer less explanation; a memorial seems to demand the naming of those lost, whereas monuments are usually anonymous. Danto states, "The paradox of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington is that the men and women killed and missing would not have been memorialized had we won the war and erected a monument instead."⁴

The traditional Western monument glorifies not only its subject but the history of classical architecture as well. The obelisk of the Washington Monument, which was erected between 1848 and 1885, has its roots in Roman architecture; long before Napoleon pilfered them from Egypt to take to Paris, obelisks carried connotations of the imperial trophy. The Lincoln Memorial, which was built in 1922, is modeled on the classic Greek temple, specifically referring to the Parthenon. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, however, makes no direct reference to the history of classical art or architecture.⁵ It does not chart a lineage from the accomplishments of past civilizations.

Yet the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is unmistakably representative of a particular period in Western art. In the uproar that accompanied its construction, it became the focus of a debate about the role of modernism in public sculpture. Just one month prior to the dedication of the memorial in November 1982, Tom Wolfe wrote a vitriolic attack on its design in the *Washington Post*:

What she [designer Maya Lin] had designed was a perfect piece of sculptural orthodoxy for the early 1980s. The style of sculpture the nullahs [of modernism] today regard as most pure (most non-bourgeois) is minimal

these guidelines was the desire that the memorial offer some kind of closure to the debates on the war. Yet, with these stipulations, the veterans set the stage for the dramatic disparity between the message of this memorial and that of its antecedents. The stipulation that the work not espouse a political stand in regard to the war—a stipulation that, in the ensuing controversy, would appear naive—ensured that the memorial would not glorify war.

The traditional war memorial achieves its status by enacting closure on a specific conflict. This closure contains the war within particular master narratives either of victory or of the bitter price of victory, a theme dominant in the “never again” texts of World War I memorials. In declaring the end of a conflict, this closure can by its very nature serve to sanctify future wars by offering a complete narrative with cause and effect intact. In rejecting the architectural lineage of monuments and the aesthetic codes of previous war memorials, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial refuses to sanction the closure and implied tradition of those structures. It can be said both to condemn and to justify future memorials.

The Black Gash of Shame

Before the memorial was built, its design came under attack not only because of its modernist aesthetics but, more significant, because it violated unspoken taboos about the remembrance of wars. When it was first unveiled, the design was condemned by certain veterans and others as a highly political statement about the shame of an unvictorious war. The memorial was termed the “black gash of shame and sorrow,” a “degrading ditch,” a “tombstone,” a “slap in the face,” and a “wailing wall for draft dodgers and New Lefters of the future.” These dissenters included a certain faction of veterans and members of the “New Right” ranging from conservative activist Phyllis Schlafly to future presidential candidate Ross Perot, who had contributed the money for the design contest. Many of these critics saw the memorial as a monument to defeat, one that spoke more directly to a nation’s guilt than to the honor of the war dead and the veterans. Veteran Tom Carhart, who had been active in the VVMF, was among many who objected to the fact that the jury had not included any veterans

Yet in situating the Vietnam Veterans Memorial purely within the context of modernism, Wolfe, Hart, and their fellow critics ignore fundamental aspects of this work, an omission that, it might be added, the sketches of the design may have aided. The memorial is not simply a flat, black, abstract wall; it is a wall inscribed with names. When members of the “public” visit this memorial, they do not go to contemplate long walls cut into the earth but to see and touch the names of those whose lives were lost in this war. Hence, to call this a modernist work is to overemphasize its physical design and to negate its commemorative purpose.

Modernist sculpture has been defined by a kind of sitelessness.¹⁰ Yet the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a site-specific work that establishes its position within the symbolic history embodied in the national monuments on and around the Washington Mall. Pointing from its axis to both the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial references, absorbs, and reflects these classical forms. Its black walls mirror not only the faces of its viewers and passing clouds but also the obelisk of the Washington Monument, thus forming a kind of pastiche of monuments. The memorial’s relationship to the earth shifts between context and decontextualization, between an effacement and an embracement of the earth; approached from above, it appears to cut into the earth; from below, it seems to rise from it. The site-specificity of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is crucial to its position as both subversive of and continuous with the nationalist discourse of the Mall.¹¹

It is as a war memorial that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial most distinguishes itself from modernist sculpture. As the first national war memorial built in the United States since those commemorating World War II, it makes a statement on war that diverges sharply from the declarations of prior war memorials. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), which organized the construction of the memorial, stipulated only two things—that it contain the names of all of those who died or are missing in action and that it be apolitical and harmonious with the site. The veterans’ initial instructions stated: “The memorial will make no political statement regarding the war or its conduct. It will transcend those issues. The hope is that the creation of the memorial will begin a healing process.”¹² Implicit within

and saw the memorial as insulting the Vietnam veterans: "The proposed design is defended on artistic grounds, but the issue is not one of art: If Americans allow that black trench to be dug, future generations will understand clearly what America thought of its Vietnam veterans."¹³

Such criticism showed how the memorial was being "read" by its opponents, and their readings compellingly reveal codes of remembrance of war memorials. Many saw its black walls as evoking shame, sorrow, and dishonor and perceived its refusal to rise above the earth as indicative of defeat. Thus, a racially coded reading of the color black as shameful was combined with a reading of a feminized earth as connoting a lack of power. The argument against the black stone was terminated by Gen. George Price, who is black, when he said at a meeting concerning the memorial: "Black is not the color of shame. I am tired of hearing it called such by you. Color meant nothing on the battlefields of Korea and Vietnam. We are all equal in combat. Color should mean nothing now."¹⁴

Precisely because of its deviation from traditional commemorative codes—white stone rising above the earth—the design was read as a political statement. In a defensive attempt to counter aesthetic arguments, an editorial in the *National Review* stated:

Our objection to this Orwellian glop does not issue from any philistine objection to new conceptions in art. It is based upon the clear political message of this design. The design says that the Vietnam War should be memorialized in black, not the white marble of Washington. The mode of listing the names makes them individual deaths, not deaths in a cause: they might as well have been traffic accidents. The invisibility of the monument at ground level symbolizes the "unmentionability" of the war—which war, as we say, is not in fact mentioned on the monument itself. Finally, the V-shaped plan of the black retaining wall immortalizes the antiwar signal, the V protest made with the fingers.¹⁵

This analysis of the memorial's symbolism, indeed a perceptive reading, points to several crucial aspects of the memorial: Its listing of names does emphasize individual deaths rather than the singular death of a body of men and women; the relationship of the memorial to the earth does refuse to evoke heroism and victory. Yet these conservative readings of the memorial, though they may have been accu-

rate in interpreting the design, did not anticipate the public response to the inscription of names.

The angry reactions to the memorial design go beyond the accusation of elite pretensions of abstraction—the controversial Washington Monument itself is the epitome of abstraction. Rather, I believe the memorial's primary (and unspoken) subversion of the codes of war remembrance is its antiphallic presence. By "antiphallic" I do not mean to imply that the memorial is somehow a passive or "feminine" form but rather that it opposes the code through which vertical monuments symbolize power and honor. The memorial does not stand erect above the landscape; it is continuous with the earth. It is contemplative rather than declarative. The V shape of the memorial has been interpreted by various commentators as standing for Vietnam, victim, victory, veteran, violate, and valor. Yet one also finds a disconcerting subtext in this debate in which the memorial is seen as implicitly evoking castration. The V of the two black granite walls, it seems, is read as a female V. The "gash" is not only a wound, it is slang for the female genitals. The memorial contains all the elements that have been associated psychoanalytically with the specter of a woman—it embraces the earth; it is the abyss; it is death.

Some critics overtly called for a phallic memorial. James Webb, a member of the VVMF's sponsoring committee, wrote:

Watching then the white phallus that is the Washington Monument piercing the air like a bayonet, you feel uplifted. You are supposed to feel uplifted. That is the intention of the designers. That is the political message. And then when you peer off into the woods at this black slash of earth to your left, this sad, dreary mass tomb, nihilistically commemorating death, you are hit with that message also. That is the debate. That is the tragedy of this memorial for those who served.¹⁶

To its critics, this antiphallic symbolized the open wound of this country's castration in an unsuccessful war, a war that "emasculated" the United States. The "healing" of this wound would therefore require a memorial that revived the narrative of the United States as a technologically superior military power and rehabilitated the masculinity of the American soldier.

The person who designed this controversial, antiphallic memorial

was unlikely to reiterate traditional codes of war remembrance. At the time her anonymously submitted design was chosen by a group of eight art experts, Maya Ying Lin was a twenty-one-year-old undergraduate at Yale University. She had produced the design as a project for a funerary architecture course. She was not only young and undecided but also Chinese-American and female. Initially, the veterans of the VVMF were pleased by this turn of events; they assumed the selection would only show how open and impartial their design contest had been.¹⁷ However, the selection of someone with "marginal" cultural status as the primary interpreter of a controversial war inevitably complicated matters. Eventually Maya Lin was defined, in particular by the media, not as American but as "other." This definition not only shaped how she was perceived by the media and some of the veterans but also raised the question of whether or not her otherness had informed the design itself. Architecture critic Michael Sorkin wrote:

Perhaps it was Maya Lin's "otherness" that enabled her to create such a moving work. Perhaps only an outsider could have designed an environment so successful in answering the need for recognition by a group of people—the Vietnam vets—who are plagued by a sense of "otherness" forced on them by a country that has spent ten years pretending not to see them. Women have been invisible a lot longer than that. Maya Lin has been able to make a memorial that doesn't insult the memory of the war by compromising the fact of its difference.¹⁸

To Sorkin, Lin's marginal status as a Chinese-American woman gave her insight into the marginalization experienced by Vietnam veterans, an analogy that noticeably erased the differences in race and age that existed between them.

When Lin's identity became known, there was a tendency in the press to characterize her design as passive, as having both a female and an Asian aesthetic. There is little doubt that in its refusal to glorify war, it is an implicitly pacifist work and, by extension, a political work. It is also emphatically antiheroic. Yet as much as it is contemplative and continuous with the earth, it can also be seen as a violent work that cuts into the earth. Lin has said: "I wanted to work with the land and not dominate it. I had an impulse to cut open the earth . . . an initial violence that in time would heal. The grass would

grow back, but the cut would remain, a pure, flat surface, like a geode when you cut into it and polish the edge."¹⁹ The black walls cannot connote a healing wound without also signifying the violence that created the wound, cutting into the earth and splitting it open.

Trouble began almost immediately between Maya Lin and the veterans. "The fund has always seen me as a female—as a child," she has said. "I went in there when I first won and their attitude was—O.K. you did a good job, but now we're going to lure some big boys—boys—to take care of it."²⁰ Lin was situated outside the veterans' discourse because she was a woman and an Asian-American and because of her approach to the project. She had made a decision deliberately not to inform herself about the war's political history to avoid being influenced by debates about the war. According to veteran Jan Scruggs, who was the primary figure in getting the memorial built: "She never asked, 'What was combat like?' or 'Who were your friends whose names we're putting on the wall?' And the vets, in turn, never once explained to her what words like 'courage,' 'sacrifice,' and 'devotion to duty' really meant."²¹

Lin's ethnicity doubly displaced her in the public debate. She took exception to the characterization of the memorial design as having an "Asian aesthetic"; she grew up in Athens, Ohio, worked at McDonald's as a teenager, and considers herself an average Midwesterner who has little sense of ethnic identity. Yet her Asian-American identity was read as particularly ironic, given her role in defining the discourse of remembrance of a war fought in Indochina (even if, with the volatile and complex politics between China and Vietnam, this conflation of ethnic identities is a particularly American one). In the debate, Lin's status as an American disappeared, and she became simply "Asian." In a *60 Minutes* broadcast at the time of the controversy, Morley Safer asked, "Was it the design that provoked such controversy or the designer, who was a student, a woman, an American, a Chinese-American?" Lin responded, "I think it is, for some, very difficult for them. I mean they sort of lump us all together, for one thing. There is a term used . . . it's called a gook."

However, Lin emphasized her position as a outsider by consistently referring to "the integrity of my design," whereas the veterans were primarily concerned with its ability to offer emotional comfort

to themselves and the families of the dead, either in terms of forgiveness or honor. The initial disagreements on design between the veterans and Lin, which ultimately led to several compromises (the veterans agreed to the chronological listing—with indexes at the site to facilitate location—and Lin agreed to the addition of opening and closing inscriptions), were not about aesthetics but about to whom the memorial belongs.

In the larger political arena, these discourses of aesthetics and commemoration were also at play. Several well-placed funders of the memorial, including Ross Perot, were unhappy with the design, and Secretary of the Interior James Watt withheld its permit.²² It became clear to the veterans of the VVMF that they had either to compromise or to postpone the construction of the memorial (which was to be ready by November 1982, in time for Veterans Day). Consequently, a plan was devised to erect a statue and flag close to the walls of the memorial; realist sculptor Frederick Hart was chosen to design it. Hart was paid \$330,000, whereas Maya Lin received just \$20,000 for her design from the same fund.²³ Originally, the veterans intended to place the flag and statue at the apex of the walls, a plan that so insulted Maya Lin that she hired a law firm to help her oppose it. Finally it was decided to place the statue in a grove of trees that stands apart from the memorial.

Erected in 1984, Hart's bronze sculpture consists of three soldiers—one black, one Hispanic, and one white—standing and looking in the general direction of the memorial (Figure 6).²⁴ It is eight feet tall, looming over visitors. The soldiers' military garb is realistically rendered, with guns slung over their shoulders and ammunition around their waists, and their expressions are somewhat bewildered and puzzled. Hart, one of the most vociferous critics of modernism in the debates over the memorial, said at the time: "My position is humanist, not militarist. I'm not trying to say there was anything good or bad about the war. I researched for three years—read everything. I became close friends with many vets, drank with them in bars. Lin's piece is a serene exercise in contemporary art done in a vacuum with no knowledge of its subject. It's nihilistic—that's its appeal."²⁵

Hart bases his credentials on a kind of "knowledge" strictly within the male domain—drinking with the veterans in a bar—and unavail-



Figure 6. Statue by Frederick Hart. Photo by the author.

able to Maya Lin, whom he on another occasion referred to as "a mere student." She described the addition of his statue as "drawing mustaches on other people's portraits."²⁶ Hart characterizes Lin as having designed her work with no "knowledge" and no "research," as a woman who works with feeling and intuition rather than expertise. He ultimately defines realism as not only a male privilege but also an aesthetic necessity in remembering war.

In Hart's sculpture, the veterans and the dead are subsumed into a singular narrative. It thus follows the tradition of the Marine Corps War Memorial that depicts the raising of the U.S. flag at Iwo Jima, a work that has attained an iconic status as *the* realist war memorial and a symbol of the United States's ability to raise its flag on foreign soil.²⁷ Hart's statue presents a symbolic image of men in war, yet one that deviates in certain ways, with its soldier's puzzled faces, from the master narrative of the male soldier as heroic figure. Ironically, the conflict over Lin's design forestalled any potential debate over the atypical expressions of Hart's soldiers.

The battle over what kind of aesthetic style best represents the

Vietnam War was, quite obviously, a battle over the discourse of the war itself. In striving for an "apolitical" design, the veterans of the VVMF had attempted to separate the memorial, itself a contested narrative, from the contested narratives of the war, ultimately an impossible task. The memorial could not be a neutral site precisely because of the divisive effects of the Vietnam War. Later, Maya Lin noted the strange appropriateness of the two memorials: "In a funny sense the compromise brings the memorial closer to the truth. What is also memorialized is that people still cannot resolve that war, nor can they separate issues, the politics, from it."²⁵

However, after Lin's memorial had actually been constructed, the debate about aesthetics and remembrance surrounding its design simply disappeared. The controversy was eclipsed by a national discussion on remembrance and healing. The experience of viewing Lin's work was so powerful for the general public that criticism of its design vanished.

The Names

There is little doubt that the memorial's power is due to the 58,196 names inscribed on its walls in a form that engages visitors (see Figure 7). The design of the memorial draws spectators inward and down toward its center, so that one has the sensation both of descending below the ground and the Washington Mall and of being pulled inward toward the walls. Hence, the design creates spaces in which the names surround visitors and invite them to touch and to see themselves within the listings.²⁹

These names, by virtue of their multiplicity, situate the Vietnam Veterans Memorial within the multiple strands of cultural memory. The memorial does not validate the collective over the value of the individual. In response to the memorial, visitors commonly think of the widening circle of pain emanating from each name, imagining for each the grieving parents, sisters, brothers, girlfriends, wives, husbands, friends, and children—imagining, in effect, the multitude of people who were directly affected by the war.

This listing of names creates an expanse of cultural memory, one that could be seen as alternately subverting, rescripting, and contrib-



Figure 7. Names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Photo by the author.

uting to the history of the Vietnam War as it is being written. The histories these names evoke and the responses they generate are necessarily multiple and replete with complex personal stakes. These narratives concern the effect of the war on the Americans who survived it and whose lives were irrevocably altered by it. The listing of names is steeped in the irony of the war—an irony afforded by retrospect, of lives lost for no discernible reason.³⁰ All accounts of the war are tinged with the knowledge that this country did not accept its memory and that the veterans were stigmatized by the nation's defeat.

Although these names are now marked within an official history, that history cannot contain the ever-widening circles that expand outward from each. The names on the walls of the memorial constitute a chant; they were read out loud at the dedication ceremony and at the tenth anniversary as a roll call of the dead.³¹ They are etched into stone. The men and women who died in the war thus achieve a historical presence through their absence. These names are listed without elaboration, with no place or date of death, no rank, no place of

lost? Do these names really signify for us the fullness of the lives that were lost, or are they so many tokens of what we cannot know, enigmas, inscrutable and silent?"³³ The name evokes both everything and nothing as a marker of the absent one. This may be why, with both the AIDS Quilt and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, visitors have felt compelled to add photographs, letters, and other memorabilia in attempts to fill the names with individual significance.

It is crucial to their effect that the names are listed not alphabetically but in chronological order. This was Lin's original intent, so that the wall would read "like an epic Greek poem" and "return the vets to the time frame of the war." The veterans were originally opposed to this idea; because they conceived the memorial specifically in terms of the needs of the veterans and family members who would visit it; they were worried that people would be unable to locate a name and simply leave in frustration. They changed their opinion, however, when they examined the Defense Department listing of casualties. Listed alphabetically, the names presented not individuals but cultural entities. There were over six hundred people named Smith, sixteen named James Jones. Read alphabetically, the names became anonymous, not individuals but statistics.

Read chronologically, however, the names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial create a narrative framework; they chart the story of the conflict. By walking along the wall, one figuratively walks through the history of the war. As the number of names listed alphabetically within a casualty day swells, the escalation of the fighting is conveyed. In addition, the fact that visitors must look up a name in the index and then find it on the wall places them in an active role; Lin and others have referred to it as a "journey." For veterans, the chronological listing provides a spatial reference for their experience of the war, a kind of memory map. They can see in certain clumps of names the scene of a particular ambush, the casualties of a doomed night patrol, or the night they were wounded.

This is not a linear narrative framework. Rather, the names form a loop, beginning as they do at the central hinge of the memorial and circling back to the center. This refusal of linearity is appropriate to a conflict that has had no narrative closure. The hinge between the two walls thus becomes a pivotal space, the narrow interval between

origin. The lack of military rank allows the names to transcend a military context and to represent the names of a society. It has often been noted that these names display the diversity of America: Fredes Mendez-Ortiz, Stephen Boryszewski, Bobby Joe Yewell, Leroy Wright. Veteran William Broyles, Jr., writes:

These are names which reach deep into the heart of America, each testimony to a family's decision, sometime in the past, to wrench itself from home and culture to test our country's promise of new opportunities and a better life. They are names drawn from the farthest corners of the world and then, in this generation, sent to another distant corner in a war America has done its best to forget.³²

Broyles is not atypical in portraying the diversity of names as indicative of America as the promised land (what of those who came here not by choice, for instance?) or in positioning the United States at the center, from which these places of cultural origins and foreign wars are seen as "distant corners." His reading of the ethnicity of the names on the walls does not consider the imbalances of that diversity—that this war was fought by a disproportionately high number of blacks and Hispanics, that the soldiers predominantly came from working- and middle-class backgrounds. Proper names in our culture have complex legal and patriarchal implications, identifying individuals specifically as members of society. On this memorial, these names are coded as American—not as Asian, black, or white. The ethnic derivations of these names are subsumed into a narrative of the American melting pot—into which, ironically, Maya Lin, as an agent of commemoration, will not fit.

The names act as surrogates for the bodies of the Vietnam War dead. It is now a ritual at the memorial for visitors to make rubbings of the names to take away with them, to hold with them the name marked in history. These names thus take on significant symbolic value as representations of the absent one. Yet what exactly do they evoke? Clearly they mark the dead irrevocably as a part of the history of the United States's involvement in the Vietnam War; but what sense of the individual can a name in stone portray? Judith Butler asks: "But do names really 'open' us to an intersubjective ground, or are they simply so many ruins which designate a history irrevocably

the end of one war and the beginning of another; it connotes a temporary peace within the cycle of war.

The question of who is named and not named on the wall is crucial to the intersection of cultural memory and history in the memorial. Veterans of the VVMF intended the memorial as a tribute not only to those who died but also to those who survived the war, hence the opening and closing inscriptions that read, in part: "In honor of the men and women of the Armed Forces who served in the Vietnam War. The names of those who gave their lives and of those who remain missing are inscribed in the order they were taken from us." There is little doubt that the memorial has become a powerful symbol for all Vietnam veterans, yet only the names of the war dead and the MIAs are inscribed on the wall, and thus within history. The distinction between the named and unnamed will determine how this memorial constructs the history of the Vietnam War after the generation of Vietnam veterans has died.

One could also argue that the listing of names limits the narrative of the memorial because of who remains unnamed. In the nationalist context of the Washington Mall, the Vietnamese become unmentionable; they are conspicuously absent in their roles as collaborators, victims, enemies, or simply the people on whose land and over whom (supposedly) this war was fought. Those whose lives were irrevocably altered or who were killed because of their opposition to the war are also absent from the discourse surrounding the memorial, except insofar as antiwar protesters are referred to by the more conservative participants in the debate as the people who would not let the war be won.

As a practical matter, the inscription of names on the memorial has posed many taxonomic problems. Though the VVMF spent months cross-checking and verifying statistics, errors have occurred. There are at least fourteen and possibly as many as thirty-eight men who are still alive whose names are inscribed in the wall.³⁴ More than two hundred names have been added to the memorial since it was first built (the initial number inscribed on the walls was 57,939), names that were held up previously for "technicalities" (such as, for example, a dispute over whether or not someone was killed within

the "presidentially designated" war zone).³⁵ Such problems signify the war's lack of closure. The impossibility of managing 58,196 sets of statistics, of knowing every detail (who died, when, and where) in a war in which human remains were often unidentifiable, has prevented any kind of closure. It has been barely noted in the media, for instance, that the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier for the Vietnam War, which was approved by Congress in 1974, was left empty and uninscribed until 1984, when some publicity drew attention to the situation.³⁶ The reason for this delay, according to the Army, was the absence of any unidentifiable remains (although the Army did have unidentified remains in its possession). Technology's ability to decipher the individual identity of a body and hence to achieve a kind of closure is thus at stake here.

Names will continue to be added to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; there is no definitive limit to the addition of names. It has been noted that the names of veterans who have died since the war from causes stemming from it are not included on the memorial—veterans who committed suicide, for instance, or who died from complications from their exposure to Agent Orange.³⁷ Are they not casualties of the war? The battles still being fought by the veterans foreclose a simple narrative of the Vietnam War.

Yet the memorial, like all memorials, is essentially a "forgetful monument," to use James Young's term. He writes, "A nation's monuments efface as much history from memory as they inscribe in it."³⁸ Framed within the nationalist context of the Washington Mall, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial must necessarily "forget" the Vietnamese and cast the Vietnam veterans as the primary victims of the war.³⁹

The Vietnam Veteran: The Perennial Soldier

Experience has fallen in value. . . Was it not noticeable at the end of the [First World] war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer but poorer in communicable experience? What ten years later was poured out in the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes mouth to mouth.

And there was nothing remarkable about that. For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile, human body.

Walter Benjamin
"The Storyteller"

The incommunicability of experience described in Walter Benjamin's famous essay, "The Storyteller," is the result of a discontinuous, fragmented experience, the experience of modern warfare. Similarly, the incommunicability of the experience of the Vietnam veterans has been a primary narrative of Vietnam War representation. This silence has been depicted as a consequence of an inconceivable kind of war, one that fit no prior images of war, one that the American public would refuse to believe. The importance of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial lies in its communicability, which in effect has mollified the incommunicability of the veterans' experience.

Though the Vietnam Veterans Memorial most obviously pays tribute to the memory of those who died during the war, it is a central icon for the veterans. It has been noted that the memorial has given them a place—one that recognizes their identities, a place at which to congregate and from which to speak. The Veterans Vigil of Honor maintains a twenty-four-hour watch at the memorial for the MIAs. Vietnam veterans haunt the memorial, often coming at night after the crowds have dispersed. It is a place where veterans can speak to their dead friends, a place of contemplation, a place that specifically marks their identities.⁴⁰ Two veterans have shot themselves at the site; a Washington, D.C., police officer who killed himself there in 1984 was called "the first casualty of the wall."⁴¹ After one suicide attempt, the wife of a veteran stated: "If my husband has something on his mind to sort out . . . he'll go to the Wall. He doesn't care if it's 2:00 A.M., raining, and below zero. All the guys are like that. There

is something about the Wall. It's like a magnet."⁴² Many veterans regard the wall as a site where they visit their memories. Several Veterans Administration hospitals bring patients with post-traumatic stress disorder on regular visits to the memorial.⁴³ Hence, the memorial is as much about survival as it is about mourning the dead.

The construction of an identity for the veterans has become the most conspicuous and persistent narrative of the memorial. The central theme of this narrative is the veterans' initial marginalization, before the memorial's construction generated discussion about them. The "welcome home" parades for the Vietnam veterans all took place after the construction of the memorial, and the huge celebration for the returning Iran hostages in January 1981 marked a turning point in popular recognition of the "nonhomecoming" of the Vietnam veterans.⁴⁴

The treatment of the veterans can be only partially explained by the uniqueness of the Vietnam War. In his well-known essay, "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?" James Fallow points to the stark class division affecting American military service, a division that began with the Vietnam War.⁴⁵ Thus, the treatment of the veterans was also a direct result of who the veterans were—not the white middle-class men who had graduate school deferments but working-class whites, blacks, Latinos, Guamanians, and Native Americans. The initial shock and acquiescence with which Vietnam veterans initially accepted their postwar treatment was a direct result of their lack of privilege.⁴⁶ In the World War II paradigm, the veterans return home to a prospering country, are greeted by a ticker-tape parade and a V-Day celebration, and find jobs waiting for them. That this mythical story omits many things—such as the discriminatory treatment of black veterans, the significant (and unacknowledged) amount of post-traumatic stress disorder among World War II veterans, and the displacement of women from factory jobs to provide employment for returning soldiers—does not lessen the influence it has had upon subsequent experiences of war.⁴⁷

The Vietnam veterans did not arrive home en masse for a celebration. Some of the most difficult stories of the veterans' experiences concern their mistreatment upon their return. Soldiers were sent to

Vietnam on one-year tours of duty. A direct consequence of this policy was that the vets returned separately, often with no transportation or support services awaiting them. Many vets have recounted how they were greeted at the airport by strangers who stared in anger and even spat at them. These incidents serve as icons for the extended alienation and mistreatment felt by the veterans. So many stories surfaced after the memorial's dedication about soldiers rejoicing at finding friends they thought were dead that one has to wonder why they were all so isolated upon their return.⁴⁸

Many veterans ended up in underfunded and poorly staffed Veterans Administration hospitals. They were expected to put their war experiences behind them and to assimilate quickly back into society. That many were unable to do so exacerbated their marginalization—they were labeled social misfits and stereotyped as potentially dangerous men liable to erupt violently at any moment. Veteran George Swiers writes:

The message sent from national leadership and embraced by the public was clear: Vietnam veterans were malcontents, liars, wackos, losers. . . . Hollywood, ever bizarre in its efforts to mirror life, discovered a marketable villain. *Kojak*, *Ironside*, and the friendly folks at *Hawaii Five-O* confronted crazed, heroin-addicted veterans with the regularity and enthusiasm [with which] Saturday morning heroes once dispensed with godless red savages. No grade-B melodrama was complete without its standard vet—a psychotic, axe-wielding rapist every bit as insulting as another one-time creature of Hollywood's imagination, the shiftless, lazy, and wide-eyed black.⁴⁹

The scapegoating of the veteran as a psychopath absolved the American public of complicity and allowed the narrative of American military power to stand. Implied within these conflicting narratives is the question of whether or not the veterans are to be perceived as victims of or complicit with the war. Peter Marin writes, "Vets are in an ambiguous situation—they were the agents and the victims of a particular kind of violence. That is the source of a pain that almost no one else can understand."⁵⁰ Ironically, their stigma has resulted in many Vietnam veterans' assumption of hybrid roles; they are both, yet neither, soldiers and civilians.

Although the marginalization of the Vietnam veterans has been acknowledged in the current discourse of healing and forgiveness

about the war, within the veterans' community another group has struggled against an imposed silence: the women veterans. Eight women military nurses were killed in Vietnam and are memorialized on the wall. It is estimated that 11,500 women, half of whom were civilians and many of whom were nurses, served in Vietnam and that 265,000 women served in the military during the Vietnam War. The experience of the women who served in Vietnam was equally affected by the difference of the war from previous U.S. wars: an unusually large proportion of them, three-quarters, were exposed to hostile fire. Upon their return, they not only were subject to post-traumatic stress but also were excluded from the male veteran community. Lynda Van Devanter recounts that she was not allowed to participate in a veterans' protest march because the male veterans thought "Nixon and the network news reporters might think we're swelling the ranks with non-vets."⁵¹ Many women have revealed that they kept their war experience a secret, not telling even their husbands about their time in Vietnam.

These women veterans were thus doubly displaced, unable to speak as veterans or as women. As a result, several women veterans began raising funds for their own memorial, and in November 1993 the Vietnam Women's Memorial was dedicated near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (see Figure 8). The statue, which was designed by Glenna Goodacre, depicts three uniformed women with a wounded soldier. Initially the women's memorial was turned down by the Commission of Fine Arts; in rejecting the proposal, J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art and chair of the commission, stated that Hart's three men were "symbolic of human kind and everyone who served" and that the addition of a women's statue would "open the doors to others seeking added representation for their ethnic group or military specialty," adding that the National Park Service had even heard from Scout Dog associations.⁵² The women of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project (VWMP) were insulted by the implication: "How could any intelligent human being consider comparing those brave women to dogs?"⁵³

The two women who direct the VWMP, Diane Carlson Evans and Donna Marie Boulay, say it is Hart's depiction of three men that makes the absence of women so visible and that they would not have

process. At the time, Evans said, "The journey for most of us still isn't over. Many are just beginning their healing. But this is our place to start."⁵⁶ Yet the radical message of commemorating women in war is undercut by the conventionality of the statue itself. A contemporary version of the *Pietà*, the statue presents one woman nurse heroically holding the body of a wounded soldier, one searching the sky for help, and one looking forlornly at the ground.⁵⁷ Benjamin Forgery, who called the women's memorial "one monument too many" in the *Washington Post*, has criticized it for cluttering up the landscape with ineffectual sculpture:

In spirit and pose the sculptor ambitiously invokes Michelangelo's "Pietà," the great Vatican marble of a grieving Mary holding the crucified body of Jesus. But the ambition is sabotaged by the subject and the artist's limited talent—compared with Michelangelo's Christ figure, this GI is as stiff as a board. The result is more like an awkward still from a "M*A*S*H" episode. . . . This sincere, blatheringly sentimental sculpture clearly satisfies the women vets' need to have their service and sacrifices recognized more dramatically than by the eight names among the wall's thousands.⁵⁸

The decision to build the women's memorial was not about aesthetics (except insofar as it reaffirms the representational aesthetic of Hart's statue) but about recognition and inclusion. However, by reinscribing the archetypal image of woman as caretaker, one that foregrounds the male veteran's body, the memorial reiterates the main obstacle to healing that women veterans face. Before several women Vietnam veterans drew attention to post-traumatic stress disorder in women, the only option many of them had in trying to deal with their memories was to go to support groups of male veterans—where, inevitably, they wound up taking care of the men. Writes Laura Palmer, "After all, these women had *degreed* in putting the needs of others before their own. 'I would sit there and triage the group,' a former nurse says."⁵⁹ Furthermore, the experience of these women differed from the men in the relentlessness of their contact with death. In an unusual statement at the ground-breaking ceremony for the women's memorial, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin Powell said: "I realized for the first time that for male soldiers, the war came in intermittent flashes of terror,

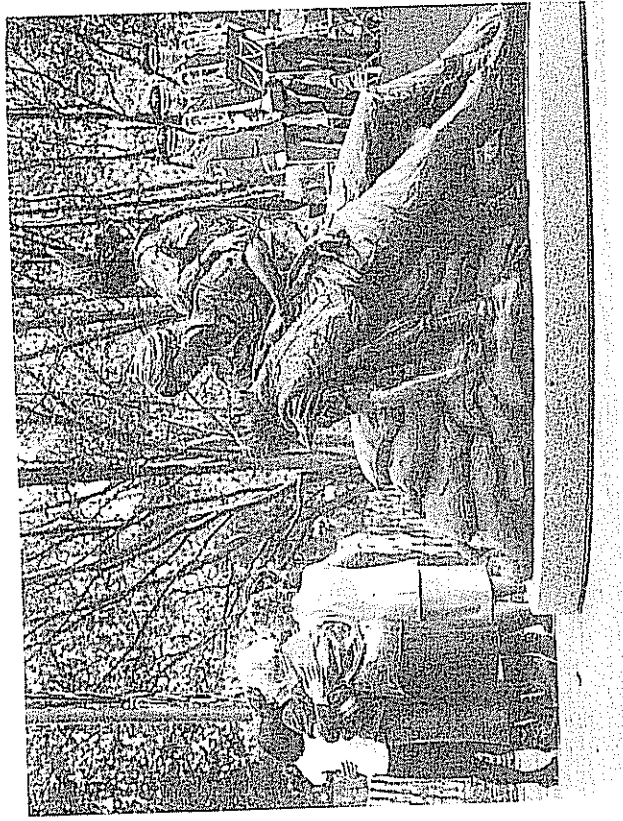


Figure 8. Diane Carlson Evans and other women veterans at the dedication ceremony for the Vietnam Women's Memorial by Glen Goodacre. Photo by Greg Gibson. AP/Wide World Photos.

initiated the project had Lin's memorial stood alone. Says Evans, "The wall in itself was enough, but when they added the men it became necessary to add women to complete the memorial."⁵⁴ Hence, the singular narrative of Hart's realist depiction is one of inclusion and exclusion. Much has been written about the ethnicity of the three men in the statue: one is obviously black, but the one intended as Hispanic is somewhat ambiguous, leading some observers to speculate that he is Jewish. (In fact, Hart used a Hispanic model.) Yet the women's memorial raises the question of what makes a memorial complete and whether all memorials are not, in some sense, incomplete.⁵⁵

One could argue that the widespread public discourse of healing around the original memorial led women veterans to speak of their memorial as the beginning rather than the culmination of a healing

occasional death, moments of pain; but for the women who were there, for the women who helped before the battle and for the nurses in particular, the terror, the death and the pain were unrelenting, a constant terrible weight that had to be stoically carried."⁶⁰

The difficulty of adequately and appropriately memorializing the women veterans falls within the larger issue of masculine identity in the Vietnam War. The traditionally male enclave of soldiers in battle by its very nature excludes women (with the front defined as the place where women are not). Women are perceived as unstable and threatening to the male bonds of combat, hence they cannot partake of the codes of that shared experience. In addition, the Vietnam veterans have a particularly complex set of codes, one that ironically has been strengthened by their marginalization. The Vietnam War is depicted as an event in which American masculinity was irretrievably damaged, and the rehabilitation of the Vietnam veteran is thus also a reinscription of American masculinity. The pain and suffering the veterans experienced since the war continue to be defined as masculine, whereas the inclusion of women into that discourse of remorse and anger is regarded as a dilution of its intensity and a threat to the rehabilitation of that masculinity.

The Vietnam veteran has thus become an emblem of the American male's crisis of masculinity, which was prompted in part by the feminist movement. Susan Jeffords writes: "The male Vietnam veteran—primarily the white male—was used as an emblem for a fallen and emasculated American male, one who had been falsely scorned by society and unjustly victimized by his own government. . . . No longer the oppressor, men came to be seen, primarily through the imagery of the Vietnam veteran, as themselves oppressed."⁶¹

The memorial's primary narrative is not about the veterans' war experience but rather about their mistreatment since the war. This narrative takes the form of a combat story, in which the enemy has been transposed from the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong to the antiwar movement, the callous American people, the Veterans Administration, and the government. The story of the struggle to build the memorial also takes on this combat form. In his book *To Heal a Nation* (which was later made into a television movie), veteran Jan Scruggs, who conceived the memorial and was the main force behind its being built, equates the battle to have the memorial built

with the battles of Vietnam itself: "Some 58,000 GIs were, in death, what they had been in life: pawns of Washington politics."⁶²

To Heal a Nation constitutes the memorial's origin story. Scruggs vows to build a memorial when, after seeing the film *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and sitting up late with a bottle of whiskey, he realizes that he cannot remember the names of the friends whose deaths fill his flashbacks. Scruggs is the lone fighter for much of this story; initially many veterans deem the idea of a memorial ludicrous, given that they do not even have adequate support services. In this combat tale, the enemies range from senators reluctant to approve the land to Secretary of Interior James Watt (who halted the project until the Hart statue was approved) and Ross Perot. The heroes include Senators Charles Mathias and John Warner, Scruggs, and several other hardworking veterans. In Scruggs's story, "grunts"—those who experienced the "real" war of combat—battle the establishment and win. It is highlighted with dramatic moments—a woman engraving the name of her brother in stone, the solidarity felt by the vets on the dedication day, veterans being reunited at the wall, and a reenactment of combat when, on the eve of the dedication, someone threatens to blow up the memorial: "The Fund called local police, the U.S. Park Police, and the FBI. Many were Vietnam veterans who expressed a special interest in providing protection. Furthermore, as word of the threat spread, groups of ex-Green Berets volunteered to stand 24-hour-a-day guard duty. The names on the wall would not be alone."⁶³

This depiction of the memorial as a continuous battleground is echoed in the activities of the Veterans Vigil for Honor, which still keeps watch at the memorial. Harry Haunes writes:

Members of the Vigil dress in camouflage uniforms, jungle boots, combat helmets, and "boonie" hats. They maintain a large army tent near the Memorial where they store Coleman lanterns, flags, petitions and other supplies. At night, an anonymous and mysterious figure dressed in camouflage and a cowboy hat steps out from a tree line near the Memorial and plays taps. For these veterans and many others like them, The Wall is more than a sacred depository of memory; The Wall is Vietnam.⁶⁴

As a form of reenactment, this conflation of the memorial and the war is a ritual of healing, although one that appears to be stuck in its

ongoing replay, its resistance to moving beyond narratives of the war.⁶⁵ For the Veterans Vigil, only the war can provide meaning. In refighting that war every day, they are also reinscribing narratives of heroism and sacrifice.

But for others there is a powerful kind of closure at the memorial. The one story for which the memorial appears to offer resolution is that of the shame felt by veterans for having fought in an unpopular war, a story that is their primary battle with history.

The Healing Wound

The "healing wound" metaphor that has prevailed in descriptions of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a bodily metaphor. It evokes many different bodies—the bodies of the Vietnam War dead, the bodies of the veterans, and the body of the American public. This wound is seen to heal through the process of remembering and commemorating the war. To dismember is to fragment a body and its memory; to remember is to make a body complete.

Where are the bodies of the memorial? The chronology of names represents bodies destroyed and inscribed permanently with the identity of war dead. Families seek out names as they would visit a grave, as the receptacle of the body; indeed, the names act as surrogates for the bodies. Many people imagine that the bodies of the dead lie behind the walls, where Lin envisioned them.⁶⁶ The status of these bodies has been transformed by the context of technological warfare. Some families of the war dead claim they did not receive the correct remains—that the remains weighed too much, for instance.⁶⁷ In addition, the unpublicized controversy over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was a dispute over the status of bodily remains. The belief that technology has rendered all remains identifiable ironically conflicted with the destructive capacity of modern warfare; some men's remains amounted to less than 30 percent of their bodies. This destructive power, which dates from World War I, renders the status of the bodies of the war dead highly problematic. Many of the most horrific descriptions of combat in Vietnam deal with the total annihilation of whole bodies. In *Dispatches*, Michael Herr wrote:

Far up the road that skirted the TOC was a dump where they burned the gear and uniforms that nobody needed anymore. . . . A jeep pulled up to the

dump and a Marine jumped out carrying a bunched-up fatigue jacket held out away from him. He looked very serious and scared. Some guy in his company, some guy he didn't even know, had been blown away right next to him, all over him. He held the fatigues up and I believed him. "I guess you couldn't wash them, could you?" I said. He really looked like he was going to cry as he threw them into the dump. "Man," he said, "you could take and scrub them fatigues for a million years, and it would never happen."⁶⁸

In war, the "tiny, fragile, human body" becomes subject to dismemberment, relegated to the "dump," to a kind of antimemory. The absence of these bodies—obliterated, interred—is both eclipsed and invoked by the names on the memorial's walls. Yet the bodies of the living Vietnam veterans have not been erased of memory. As the bodies of survivors, they have complicated the history of the war. Indeed, history operates more efficiently when its agents are no longer alive. These veteran bodies, dressed in fatigues, scarred and disabled, contaminated by toxins, refuse to let certain narratives of completion stand. Memories of war have been deeply encoded in these bodies, marked literally and figuratively in their flesh—one of the most tragic aftermaths of the war is the widespread genetic deformity caused by Agent Orange among veterans' children and the Vietnamese.

The bodies of the surviving veterans resist the closure of history and provide a perceptible site for a continual remembering of the war's effects. In *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry describes how the war wounded serve as vehicles for memorialization. She notes that "injuries memorialize without specifying winner or loser" and have "no relation to the contested issues." The act of injuring, according to Scarry, has two functions: as "the activity by means of which a winner and a loser are arrived at" and as a means of providing "a record of its own activity."⁶⁹ The wound functions as a testament to the act of injuring. Thus, the body of the veteran itself is a tangible record, a kind of war memorial.

The veterans' healing process requires an individual and collective closure on certain narratives of the war. But when that healing process is ascribed to a nation (as in the title of Scarry's book, *To Heal a Nation*), the effect is to erase the individual bodies involved; the wounds of individuals become subsumed into the nation's healing. Similarly, Scarry writes, the traditional perception of an army as a single body tends to negate the body of the individual soldier:

1995. That sculpture, a group of nineteen gray, larger-than-life figures walking across a field, stands on the opposite side of the reflecting pool from the Vietnam memorial.⁷²

The rush to embrace the memorial as a cultural symbol reveals not only the relief of telling a history that has been taboo but also a desire to reinscribe that history. The black granite walls of the memorial act as a screen for myriad cultural projections; it is easily appropriated for a variety of interpretations of the war and of the experience of those who died in it. To the veterans, the memorial makes amends for their treatment since the war; to the families and friends of those who died, it officially recognizes their sorrow and validates a grief that was not previously sanctioned; to others, it is either a profound antiwar statement or an opportunity to recast the narrative of the war in terms of honor and sacrifice.

The memorial's popularity must thus be seen within the context of a very active scripting and rescripting of the war and as an integral component in the recently emerged Vietnam War nostalgia industry. This sentiment is not confined to those who wish to return to the intensity of wartime; it is also felt by the news media, which long to recapture their moment of moral power—the Vietnam War made very good television. Michael Clark writes:

Vietnam was recollected by the cultural apparatus that had constituted our memory of the war all along . . . [it] summoned a cast of thousands to the streets of New York, and edited out information that was out of step. It healed over the wounds that had refused to close for ten years with a balm of nostalgia, and transformed guilt and doubt into duty and pride. And with a triumphant flourish it offered us the spectacle of its most successful creation, the veterans who will fight the next war.⁷³

As the healing process is transformed into spectacle and commodity, a complex industry of nostalgia has grown. The veterans are not simply actors in this nostalgia; some are actively involved in orchestrating it. Numerous magazines that reexamine and recount Vietnam War experiences have emerged; the merchandising of Frederick Hart's statue (posters, T-shirts, a Franklin Mint miniature, and a plastic model kit) generates about \$50,000 a year, half of which goes to the VVMF and half to Hart;⁷⁴ and travel agencies market tours to

We respond to the injury as an imaginary wound in an imaginary body, despite the fact that that imaginary body is itself made up of thousands of real human bodies, and thus composed of actual (hence woundable) human tissue. . . . A colossal severed artery, if anything, works to deflect attention away from rather than call attention to what almost certainly lies only a very short distance behind the surface of that image, a terrifying number of bodies with actually severed arteries.⁷⁰

Yet the body Scarry describes is the wounded body of the conventional army—the army of fronts, rears, flanks, and arteries. In the Vietnam War the army was not, from the beginning, a whole body but rather a body of confused signals, infiltrated bases, mistaken identities, fragging (the killing of incompetent or unpopular officers by their own troops), and a confusion of allies and enemy. In this already fragmented body, remembering (restoring the wholeness of the body) is highly problematic. What happens when the body to be restored is the nation? Does healing mean a foreclosing or an expansion of the discourse of the war? Is it a coming to terms or a desire to put the war behind us? The healing process of the veterans has been couched in terms of atonement and asking forgiveness; when applied to the nation, this process connotes not remembrance but forgetting, an erasure of problematic events in order to smooth the transition of difficult narratives into the present.

The Memorial as Shrine

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial has been the subject of an extraordinary outpouring of emotion since it was built. More than 150,000 people attended its dedication ceremony, and some days as many as 20,000 people walk by its walls. It is the most heavily visited site on the Washington Mall, with an estimated total of 22 to 30 million visitors.⁷¹ The memorial has taken on all of the trappings of a religious shrine; it has been compared to Lourdes and the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. People bring personal artifacts to leave at the wall as offerings, and coffee-table photography books document and interpret these experiences as a collective recovery from the war. The wall has also spawned the design of at least 150 other memorials, including the Korean War Veterans Memorial, which was dedicated in July

Indochina for veterans. In the hawkish *Vietnam* magazine, advertisements display a variety of war-related products: the Vietnam War Commemorative Combat Shotgun, the Vietnam Veterans Trivia Game, Vietnam War medallions, posters, T-shirts, and calendars. Needless to say, the Vietnam War is also now big business in both television drama and Hollywood movies.

As a kind of "history without guilt," according to Michael Kammen, nostalgia is not a singular activity pursued by former participants. Nostalgia about the Vietnam War takes many forms. Those who fought and experienced the war—the veterans, the war reporters, the support staff—look back on the highly charged experience of combat, the intensified relationships they formed, and the feeling of purpose that many of them, however ironically, felt (this latter response is most notable in the accounts of women nurses). The media have become nostalgic for their own moment of purposefulness in covering and exposing the "real" stories of the war, which the military and political establishment attempted to hide. Finally, those who were too young to experience the Vietnam War or the antiwar movement are fascinated by this particular time. As I will discuss in chapter 3, this generation has flocked to see films about the war, their concepts of it shaped by *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and *Platoon* (1986).⁷⁵ This nostalgia represents a desire to experience war.

Though the design of Maya Lin's memorial does not lend itself to marketable reproductions, the work has functioned as a catalyst for much of this nostalgia.⁷⁶ The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is the subject of no fewer than twelve books, many of them photography collections that focus on the interaction of visitors with the names.⁷⁷ The memorial has tapped into a reservoir of need to express in public the pain of this war, a desire to transfer private memories into a collective experience. Many personal artifacts have been left at the memorial: photographs, letters, poems, teddy bears, dog tags, combat boots and helmets, MIA/POW bracelets, clothes, medals of honor, headbands, beer cans, plaques, crosses, playing cards (see Figure 9).⁷⁸ At this site the objects are transposed from personal to cultural artifacts, items bearing witness to pain suffered.

Thus, a very rich and vibrant dialogue of deliberate, if sometimes very private, remembrance takes place at the memorial. Of the ap-

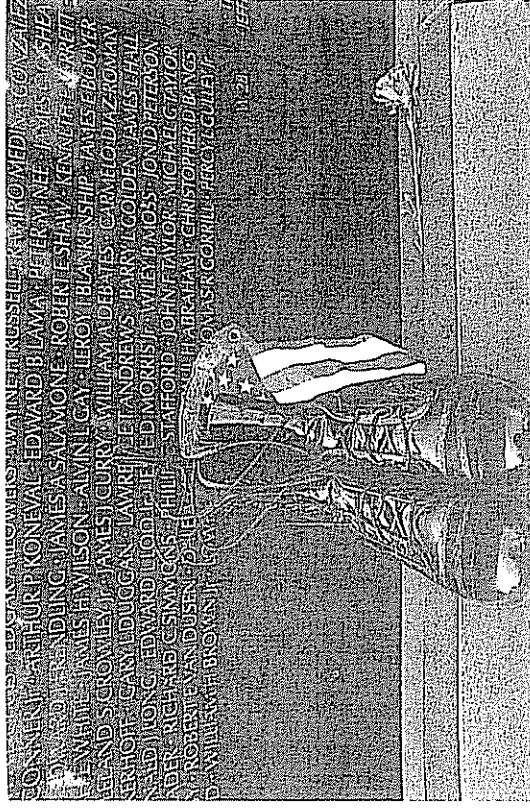


Figure 9. Artifacts at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Photo by the author.

proximately 40,000 objects left at the wall, the vast majority have been left anonymously. Relinquished before the wall, the letters tell many stories:

—Dear Michael: Your name is here but you are not. I made a rubbing of it, thinking that if I rubbed hard enough I would rub your name off the wall and you would come back to me. I miss you so.

—We did what we could but it was not enough because I found you here. You are not just a name on this wall. You are alive. You are blood on my hands. You are screams in my ears. You are eyes in my soul. I told you you'd be all right, but I lied, and please forgive me. I see your face in my son, I can't bear the thought. You told me about your wife, your kids, your girl, your mother. And then you died. Your pain is mine. I'll never forget your face. I can't. You are still alive.

—Dear Sir, For twenty-two years I have carried your picture in my wallet. I was only eighteen years old that day that we faced one another on that trail in Chu Lai, Vietnam. Why you didn't take my life I'll never know. You stared at me for so long, armed with your AK-47, and yet you did not fire. Forgive me for taking your life, I was reacting just the way I was trained, to kill V.C. . . .⁷⁹

The memorial is perceived by visitors as a site where they can speak to the dead (where, by implication, the dead are present) and to a particular audience—seen variously as the American public and the community of veterans. It is because of this process that the wall is termed by many a “living memorial.” It is the only site in the Washington, D.C., area that appears to be conducive to this kind of artifact ritual.⁸⁰

Many of these letters are addressed not to visitors but to the dead. They are messages for the dead that are intended to be shared as cultural memory. Often they reflect on the lives the dead were unable to live: one offers symbols of traditional life passages, such as a wedding bouquet, baby shoes, Christmas tree ornaments, and champagne glasses to “celebrate your 25th wedding anniversary”; another is placed in a gold frame with the sonogram image of a prospective grandchild. The voices of the Vietnam War dead are also heard through their own words, as many families leave copies of letters written by GIs, letters tinged with irony because they represent lives cut short.

For many, leaving artifacts at the memorial is an act of catharsis, a release of long-held objects to memory. A well-worn watch, for instance, was accompanied by a note explaining that it was being left for a friend who was always asking what time it was and who died wearing it. A Vietcong wedding ring was accompanied by a note reading, “I have earned this ring for 18 years and it’s time for me to lay it down. This boy is not my enemy any longer.” Other objects include a can of C-rations, a “short stick” (on which GIs would mark how much longer they were “in country”), a rifle marked with eighteen notches (possibly signifying either kills or months spent in country), Vietnamese sandals, and a grenade pin, each imbued with memory and carried for many years. For those who left these objects, the memorial represents a final destination and a relinquishing of their memory.

The artifacts left at the memorial are talismans of redemption, guilt, loss, and anger. Many offer apologies to the war dead, and many are addressed to “those who died for us.” Some appear to be ironically humorous—a shot of whiskey or a TV set—whereas others display deep-set anger (a “Hanoi Jane Urinal Sticker”). A few are simply

startling: someone left a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The dominant tone, though, is one of asking forgiveness for the suffering, the loss, for having lived.

The National Park Service, which is now in charge of maintaining the memorial, operates an archive of the materials left there.⁸¹ Originally the Park Service classified these objects as “lost and found.” Later, Park Service officials realized the artifacts had been left intentionally and began to save them. The objects thus moved from the cultural status of being “lost” (without category) to being historical artifacts. They have now even turned into artistic artifacts; the manager of the archive writes:

These are no longer objects at the Wall, they are communications, icons possessing a substructure of underpinning emotion. They are the products of culture, in all its complexities. They are the products of individual selection. With each object we are in the presence of a work of art of individual contemplation. The thing itself does not overwhelm our attention since these are objects that are common and expendable. At the Wall they have become unique and irreplaceable, and, yes, mysterious.⁸²

Labeled “mysterious” and thus coded as original works of art, these objects are given value and authorship. Some of the people who left them have since been traced. To write *Shrapnel in the Heart*, Laura Palmer sought out and eventually interviewed the authors of various letters (although some declined), and several television shows concerning the memorial have attempted to assign authorship to the artifacts.⁸³ The attempt to tie these objects and letters to their creators reveals again the shifting realms of personal and cultural memory. Assigned authorship and placed in a historical archive, the objects are pulled from cultural memory, a realm in which they are meant to be shared and to participate in the memories of others.

That the majority of objects are left anonymously testifies to the memorial’s power as a site of cultural remembrance. Initially, many of the items left at the memorial indicated a certain spontaneity: letters scribbled on hotel stationery, for instance. Now more letters are computer printed, and some are personally addressed to Duery Felton, Jr., curator of the collection. It would seem that people now leave things at the memorial precisely because they know that they will

be preserved and thus attain the status of historical artifacts. This cataloguing affects the capacity of visitors at the memorial to experience the artifacts. Many of them are placed in plastic bags by volunteers, which makes people reluctant to touch them, and they are all removed at the end of the day they are left.

The memorial has become not only the primary site of remembrance for the Vietnam War but also a site where people pay homage to current conflicts and charged public events. Artifacts concerning the abortion debate, the AIDS epidemic, gay rights, and the Persian Gulf War have been left at the memorial. Hence, the memorial's collection inscribes a history not only of the American participation in the Vietnam War but also of national issues and events since the war. It is testimony to the memorial's malleability as an icon that both prowar and antiwar artifacts were left there during the Persian Gulf War.

The ritual of leaving something behind can be seen as an active participation in the accrual of many histories; the archiving of these artifacts also subsumes these artifacts within history. Michel Foucault has written:

The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass . . . they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance of specific regularities . . . it is that which . . . defines at the outset *the system of enunciability*.⁸⁴

The traditional archive serves a narrative function, prescribing the limits of history and defining what will and will not be preserved. The archive determines what will speak for history. However, the archive of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is less restrictive than many archives. It contains all artifacts left at the memorial that have been personalized in some way (flowers are not saved, and flags are only saved if they have writing on them).⁸⁵ Objects are collected daily and marked with the date and location. The criteria of inclusion in the archive are thus decided by the public, whose leaving of artifacts increasingly reflects a conscious participation in history-making.

Because the collection of artifacts has received significant attention, including a book, *Offerings at the Wall*, Felton has been con-

cerned with increasing public access to it. In 1992 an exhibition of artifacts opened at the Smithsonian Museum of American History. Though it was only intended to remain on display for six months, the public response was so huge that the show has been extended indefinitely. Since that time several other exhibits have been held throughout the country, and the collection is being photographed and assembled on CD-ROM. However, public exhibition and publication of the artifacts raise issues of copyright and ownership. To whom do the artifacts actually belong? Felton has created standards to protect the privacy of the living (he will not exhibit objects that display the name and address of a living person). He also feels issues of religious belief must be observed. For this reason, he invited several Native American shamans to conduct a blessing ceremony at the archive before the artifacts were placed on exhibit.⁸⁶

One of the most compelling features of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial collection is its anonymity, mystery, and ambiguity. Felton, himself a combat veteran, has established a network of veterans throughout the country who help him to identify obscure insignia and the meanings of some objects. Through this network, a very specific history is being compiled, one informed by the particular codes of the participants of the war. According to Felton, those who have left artifacts range from those who want to tell only him the story behind it, to those who don't want to talk about it all, to those who seek press attention. However, it appears that the stories behind a substantial number of artifacts may never be known and that the telling of these stories to history was never the purpose of their being placed at the memorial. Though couched within an official history and held by a government institution, these letters and offerings to the dead will continue to assert individual narratives, strands of cultural memory, that disrupt historical narratives. They resist history precisely through their obscurity, their refusal to yield specific meanings.

The Construction of a History

The politics of memory of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial shifts continuously in a tension of ownership and narrative complexity. Who is actually being allowed to speak for the experience of the war? Has

the Vietnam Veterans Memorial facilitated the emergence of the voices of veterans and their families and friends in opposition to the voices of the media and the government? Healing can be an individual process or a national or cultural process; the politics of each is quite different.

The walls of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial act as a screen for many projections about the history of the Vietnam War and its aftermath. Beyond its foregrounding of individual names and the condemnation of war implicit in that listing, the memorial does not endorse any of the contested versions of the Vietnam War. It has nevertheless catalyzed a rewriting of the history of that war, primarily because its emphasis on the veterans and war dead has allowed the themes of heroism, sacrifice, and honor to resurface.

Although this closure of the veterans' period of estrangement seems not only just but also long overdue, its implications can become insidious when transferred into mainstream discourse about the memorial. When, for instance, *Newsweek* printed a story in 1982 entitled, "Honoring Vietnam Veterans—At Last," the desire not only to rectify but also to forget the mistreatment of the veterans was obvious. Much of the current embrace of the memorial amounts to historical revisionism. The period between the end of the war and the positioning of the memorial as a national wailing wall has been more than long enough for memories and culpability to fade. Ironically, the memorial allows for an erasure of many of the specifics of history. It is rarely noted that the discussion surrounding the memorial never mentions the Vietnamese people. This is not a memorial to their loss; they cannot even be mentioned in the context of the Mall. Nor does the memorial itself allow for their mention; though it allows for an outpouring of grief, it does not speak to the intricate reasons why the lives represented by the inscribed names were lost in vain.

Thus, remembering is in itself a form of forgetting. Does the remembrance of the battles fought by the veterans in Vietnam and at home necessarily screen out any acknowledgment of the war's effect on the Vietnamese? In its listing of U.S. war dead, and in the context of the Mall, the memorial establishes Americans, rather than Vietnamese, as the primary victims of the war. For instance, questions

about the 1,300 American MIAs are raised at the memorial, yet in that space no mention can be made of the 300,000 Vietnamese MIAs. Does the process of commemoration necessitate choosing sides?⁸⁷

Artist Chris Burden created a sculpture in 1991, *The Other Vietnam Memorial*, in reaction to the memorial's nonacknowledgment of the Vietnamese. Burden's piece consists of large copper leaves, twelve by eight feet, arranged as a kind of circular standing book, on which are engraved 3 million Vietnamese names to commemorate the 3 million Vietnamese who died in the war. He says: "Even though I feel sorry for the individuals named on [the Vietnam Veterans Memorial], I was repulsed by the idea. I couldn't help but think that we were celebrating our dead, who were aggressors, basically, and wonder where were the Vietnamese names?"⁸⁸ Burden's listing is not unproblematic; he was unable to get an actual listing of the dead, so he took 4,000 names and repeated them over and over again. Despite its awkward generic naming, however, Burden's sculpture exposes a fundamental limit of commemoration within nationalism. Why must a national memorial reenact conflict by showing only one side of the conflict? What is the memory produced by a national memorial?

The memorial's placement on the Washington Mall inscribes it within a nationalist discourse, restricting the discourse of memory it can provide. Its presence indicates both the limitations and the complexity of that nationalist discourse. Lauren Berlant writes:

When Americans make the pilgrimage to Washington they are trying to grasp the nation in its totality. Yet the totality of the nation in its capital city is a jumble of historical modalities, a transitional space between local and national cultures, private and public property, archaic and living artifacts. . . . It is a place of national *mediation*, where a variety of nationally inflected media come into visible and sometimes incommensurate contact.⁸⁹

The memorial asserts itself into this "jumble of historical modalities," both a resistant and compliant artifact. It serves not as a singular statement but as a site of mediation, a site of conflicting voices and opposing agendas. This multiplicity of meanings renders the memorial central to Berlant's definition of the complexity of public space in Washington.

However, commemoration is ultimately a process of legitimization

and the memorial lies at the center of a struggle between narratives. It has spawned two very different kinds of remembrance: one a re-trenched historical narrative that attempts to rewrite the Vietnam War in a way that reinscribes U.S. imperialism and the masculinity of the American soldier, the other a textured and complex remembrance that allows the Americans affected by this war—the veterans, their families, and the families and friends of the war dead—to speak of loss, pain, and futility.⁹⁰ The memorial thus stands in a precarious space between these opposing interpretations of the war.

Chapter Three

Reenactment and the Making of History

The Vietnam War as Docudrama

History and cultural memory converge in very particular ways in the form of the docudrama. As a melding of historical fact and dramatic form, the docudrama is in essence a mimetic interpretation of the past. In the cultural reenactment of the original drama, coherence and narrative structure emerge, and fragments of memory are made whole.

The cinematic docudrama exerts significant influence in the construction of national meaning in the United States. For much of the American public, docudramas are a primary source of historical information. They afford a means through which uncomfortable histories of traumatic events can be smoothed over, retold, and ascribed new meanings. Like a memorial, the docudrama offers closure, a process that can subsume cultural memory and personal memory into history.

The history of the Vietnam War is being written from multiple perspectives and in multiple media. Historians have examined issues raised by the war, the artifacts it produced, and the memories of the Vietnam veterans from a variety of viewpoints. In addition, the history of the war is packaged in television documentaries, anniversary specials, and even CD-ROMs. Within this complex array of histories, I would like to examine the role of movie docudramas precisely because of their capacity to create popular interpretations of the war. Although they are necessarily less complete and less accurate than

Chapter Two

1. After the memorial was built, a name from an American killed in 1957 was discovered. It was added to the memorial out of order. See Thomas Allen, *Offerings at the Wall* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1995), p. 242.
2. Arthur Danto, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *The Nation* (August 31, 1985), p. 152.
3. Charles Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (Summer 1986), p. 689.
4. Danto, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," p. 153.
5. However, designer Maya Lin was influenced in her design by a memorial by Sir Edwin Lutyens in Thiepval, France, for the dead of the Somme offensive in World War I, which consists of a great arch inscribed with 73,000 names.
6. Tom Wolfe, "Art Disputes War," *Washington Post*, October 13, 1982, p. B4.
7. Kenneth Baker, "Andre in Retrospect," *Art in America* (April 1980), pp. 88-94.
8. See Robert Storr, "Tilted Arc: Enemy of the People," in Arlene Raven, ed., *Art in the Public Interest* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989); and Casey Nelson Blake, "An Atmosphere of Effrontery: Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, and the Crisis of Public Art," in Richard Wrightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Power of Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 247-89. Maya Lin admires Serra's work, and her debt to Serra was cited by supporters of *Tilted Arc* in the hearings about the work's potential removal (Blake, "Atmosphere of Effrontery," p. 276).
9. Frederick Hart, "Letter to the Editor," *Art in America* (November 1983), p. 5.
10. Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic* (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 31-42.
11. Designer Maya Lin calls herself "super site-specific" and did not decide on the final design until she visited the site. However, a traveling version of the wall has toured the country with powerful effect. This effect would seem to be the result of the traveling wall's reference of the site-specific wall, in addition to the power evoked by the inscribed names in whatever location.
12. Jan Scruggs and Joel Swardlow, *To Heal a Nation* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 53.
13. Tom Carhart, "Insulting Vietnam Vets," *New York Times*, October 24, 1981.
14. Quoted in Scruggs and Swardlow, *To Heal a Nation*, p. 100.

15. "Stop That Monument," *National Review*, September 18, 1981, p. 1064.
 16. Quoted in Mary McLeod, "The Battle for the Monument," in Helene Lipstadt, ed., *The Experimental Tradition* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1989), p. 125.
 17. The other designs in the competition spanned a broad array of approaches. Writes jurist Grady Clay, "The entries included every imaginable form and type of 'memorial,' from a building-sized military helmet to gaunt groups of soldiers looking skyward for a helicopter. There were many variations on the Fallen Comrade theme, and a fascinating variety of memorial glades, walls, mounds, hills, mazes, groves and earthen enclosures, as well as a host of geometric arrangements—open circles, closed circles, broken circles, obelisks—and variegated symbols such as eternal flames, broken columns, a giant pair of combat boots, a massive ceramic-tile American flag, and a permanently maintained dovecote with fluttering doves of peace" (see "Vietnam's Aftermath," *Landscape Architecture* [March 1982], p. 55). Mary McLeod writes that Lin's project accomplished an integration with the landscape and contemplative nature "with a minimum of means, making most of the other entries look overwrought or ostentatious" ("The Battle for the Monument," p. 120).
 18. Michael Sorkin, "What Happens When a Woman Designs a War Monument?" *Vogue* (May 1983), p. 122.
 19. Quoted in "America Remembers: Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *National Geographic* 167, no. 5 (May 1985), p. 557.
 20. "An Interview with Maya Lin," in Reese Williams, ed., *Unwinding the Vietnam War* (Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1987), p. 271.
 21. Scruggs and Swardlow, *To Heal a Nation*, p. 79.
 22. Perot's role in this controversy and his tactics in dealing with the VVMF were examined in more detail by the media when he was a presidential candidate in 1992. Perot, who served four years in the Navy in the 1950s and is an advocate for veterans, had actually tried to build a monument in the 1970s but was unsuccessful. He had given an initial \$10,000 and then a larger donation of \$160,000 to the fund. However, he hated Lin's design. Subsequently, he threatened the fund and was even party to hiring Roy Cohn, a notoriously unscrupulous New York lawyer, to examine the fund's books. The fund was audited by the General Accounting Office, which cleared it in 1984. Jan Scruggs has said, "I found his tactics frightening, but I wasn't going to back down." See John Mintz, "Perot's War," *Washington Post*, July 7, 1992.
- Perot is a strong proponent of Hart's statue. In his personal gallery he has a maquette of the statue of three men, in front of which he often poses

for photographs. See Michael Kelly, "Where Perot Exhibits a Lifetime of Memories," *New York Times*, June 20, 1992, p. 8.

23. Mary McLeod, "The Battle for the Monument," p. 127.

24. Hart's statue has no official name, but it is informally called "Three Fighting Men," "Three Man Statue," or variations on these names. Duery Felton, Jr., curator of the collection of artifacts left at the memorials, notes that it is ironic that even though Hart chose not to title the statue like most traditional memorials, people feel compelled to name it (telephone interview with author, June 1, 1995).

25. "An Interview with Frederick Hart," in Reese Williams, ed., *Unwinding the Vietnam War* (Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1987), p. 274.

26. Quoted in Rick Horowitz, "Maya Lin's Angry Objections," *Washington Post*, July 7, 1982, p. B1.

27. The Marine Corps War Memorial is heavily dependent on modern-day codes of realism. It is based on a famous, Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph taken by photojournalist Joe Rosenthal and thus is coded as a moment captured from reality. Of the six men in the photograph, three survived the war and posed for sculptor Felix W. de Weldon (for whom Frederick Hart once worked as an assistant). Ironically, the famous Rosenthal photograph depicted not the initial flag-raising but rather the replacement of the small original flag with a larger one. The iconic status of the Iwo Jima Memorial is a direct outcome of its replication of a photographic image. See Marvin Heiferman, "One Nation, Chiseled in Pictures," *The Architect* 25 (1989), p. 10; the National Park Service brochure on the United States Marine Corps War Memorial; and Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall, *Iwo Jima* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

According to Marling and Wetenhall, whose book on Iwo Jima is an account of the cultural role played by that image, the men depicted in the photograph (one of whom was Native American) were lauded in the media, although the men who first reached the summit and raised the smaller flag, an act photographed by Lou Lowery, were ignored. Heroism seems to be directly related to its depiction in an iconic image.

28. Quoted in Scruggs and Sverdlow, *To Heal a Nation*, p. 133. Lan has continued to influence the aesthetics of memorials. In 1989 she designed a civil rights memorial for the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, which adds water to the motif of names inscribed on a wall; people touch a chronology of events and the names of those martyred in the civil rights movement as water runs over the inscriptions.

29. Although the Somme memorial that Lan credits with influencing her is inscribed with the names of the dead, many of the names on the arch are quite far away from visitors.

30. Paul Fussell notes that irony constitutes an aid to war memories: "In reading memoirs of the war, one notices the same phenomenon over and over. By applying to the past a paradigm of ironic action, a rememberer is enabled to locate, draw forth, and finally shape into significance an event or a moment which otherwise would merge without meaning into the general undifferentiated stream" (*The Great War and Modern Memory* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1975], p. 30).

31. There were precedents in the antiwar movement for this kind of roll call of names, which is also an integral part of displays of the AIDS Quilt. In November 1969, 45,000 people, each wearing a placard carrying the name of an American killed in the war, marched through Washington, D.C., and each stood one by one before the White House and spoke a name, a process that took forty hours (see James Quay, "Epilogue," in Grace Sevy, ed., *The American Experience in Vietnam* [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989], pp. 300-302).

32. William Broyles, Jr., "Remembering a War We Want to Forget," *Newsweek* (November 22, 1982), p. 82.

33. Judith Butler, "Review Essay: Spirit in Ashes," *History and Theory* 27, no. 1 (1988), p. 69.

34. See Associated Press, "38 Living Veterans May Be on Memorial," *San Jose Mercury News*, February 15, 1991. The reason for this error appears to be the result of faulty record keeping by the Defense Department and a 1973 fire that destroyed many records. Robert Doubek, a co-founder of the VVMF, decided to include thirty-eight names of casualties for which there were incomplete records because he felt it was better to err by inclusion rather than omission. Cases like this continue to surface.

35. Two early disputes involved a medic who was sent home in a coma and never regained consciousness and a soldier who was killed in a plane crash while returning from leave in Hong Kong. At the time, their exclusion from the memorial was very painful for their families. "I've been absolutely crushed and I'm living my nightmare all over again," said medic Charles McCongle's mother, Jennie (quoted in "Mothers of 2 Veterans Angry at Vietnam List," *New York Times*, November 18, 1982). Both of these names were later added to the memorial.

36. Peter Ehrenhaus, "Commemorating the Unwon War," *Journal of Communication* 39, no. 1 (Winter 1989), p. 105.

37. It is estimated that more than 9,000 Vietnam veterans have committed suicide since returning from the war (see Peter Meyer and the editors of *Life, The Wall* [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993], p. 85). According to Duery Felton, approximately 100,000 veterans are thought by the Veterans Administration to have died of war-related causes. While many of them are

memorialized by artifacts left at the wall, they are not listed in any directory. "Another directory is needed," he states, "but how can it be compiled?" (telephone interview with author, June 1, 1995).

38. James Young, "Memory and Monument," in Geoffrey Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 105.

39. The exclusion of the Vietnamese has not, however, precluded their participation as visitors at the memorial. Vietnamese-American Andrew Lam compares the rituals of the memorial to those of Vietnamese shrines. "If there are ghosts in America," he says, "they would comfortably congregate there, for it is the only American place of tragic consequences" ("My Vietnam, My America," *The Nation* [December 10, 1990], p. 725). Many Vietnamese have visited the memorial as a means of forgiving those who fought in the war. Xuan Burns, who was hit by napalm and wounded by U.S. troops, left a letter at the memorial that read, "I want to tell you how sorry I am for what you had to go through for me and my country" (quoted in Karlly Barker, "At the Wall, Sympathy and Sorrow," *Washington Post*, November 11, 1989).

40. That the veterans perceive the memorial to belong to them was illustrated when President Clinton gave a speech there on Memorial Day in 1993, not long after taking office. In protest of Clinton's status as an evader of the war, some veterans held up signs saying "Never Ever Trust a Draft Dodger," booed, and turned their backs on him when he began to speak (Thomas Friedman, "Clinton, in Vietnam War Tribute, Finds Old Wound Is Slow to Heal," *New York Times*, June 1, 1993). Clearly, despite his status as commander in chief, he was perceived by them not to belong at the memorial.

41. Wayne Slater, "Vet Couldn't Forget . . . Became First Casualty of Vietnam Memorial," *Denver Post*, November 11, 1984.

42. Quoted in Christopher Buckley, "The Wall," *Esquire* (September 1985), pp. 61–62.

43. In 1990, a study of Vietnam veterans revealed that 15.2 percent of male Vietnam veterans, or 479,000 of the 3.14 million men who served, currently suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Robert Jay Lifton, "Preface to the 1992 Edition," in *Home from the War: Learning From Vietnam Veterans* (Boston: Beacon Press, [1973] 1992), p. ix).

44. Myra MacPherson, "A Different War," in Sevy, ed., *The American Experience in Vietnam*, p. 66.

45. James Fallows, "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?" in A. D. Horne, ed., *The Wounded Generation* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1981), pp. 15–29.

46. Similarly, Fallows notes that this class division was integral to a tragic prolongation of the war: "As long as the little gold stars kept going to homes in Chelsea and the backwoods of West Virginia, the mothers of Beverly Hills and Chevy Chase and Great Neck and Belmont were not on the telephones to their congressmen, screaming you killed my boy, they were not writing to the President that his crazy, wrong, evil war had put their boys in prison and ruined their careers. It is clear by now that if the men of Harvard had wanted to do the very most they could to help shorten the war, they should have been drafted or imprisoned en masse" ("What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?" p. 20).

47. In their study of American veterans, Richard Severo and Lewis Milford point out that in terms of the government treatment of and public attitude toward veterans, World War II was an exception: "The soldiers of World War II came home as unquestioned heroes after a struggle that the overwhelming majority of Americans saw as just and right against one of history's great villains. Such years had a poignancy and power that quite overshadowed the tepid welcomes given later to the combat veterans of the stalemate that was Korea, whose resolve, patriotism, and very manhood had been unjustly besmirched. . . . The veterans of Vietnam were very much a part of that tradition. They, too, chose to believe that the post-World War II welcome home was the normative thing—not the vilification and false information spread after Korea. In truth, it was the years following World War II that had a stronger claim to being regarded as 'different'" (Richard Severo and Lewis Milford, *The Wages of War* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989], p. 420).

48. On the tenth anniversary of the memorial in November 1992, the Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, an organization that sponsors support services around the memorial, and Electronic Data Systems (EDS), the company founded and sold by Ross Perot, began a program called In Touch. This free electronic service assists people who want to contact others who knew someone named on the wall. Eventually the program will help Vietnam veterans find each other. See Andrew Brownstein, "24 Years Later, Two Finally Are Linked by Loss," *Washington Post*, November 12, 1992.

49. George Swiers, "'Demented Vets' and Other Myths," in Harrison Salisbury, ed., *Vietnam Reconsidered* (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), p. 198.

50. Peter Mann, "Conclusion," in Salisbury, ed., *Vietnam Reconsidered*, p. 213.

51. Quoted in Susan Wolf, "Women and Vietnam," in Reese Williams, ed., *Unwinding the Vietnam War* (Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1987), p. 245.

52. See Severo and Milford, *The Wages of War*, p. 424; and Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall, "The Sexual Politics of Memory: The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project and 'The Wall,'" *Prospects* 14 (1989), p. 358.

53. Quoted in Renny Christopher, "I Never Really Became a Woman Until . . . I Saw the Wall," *Sub/Version* (1992), p. 7.

54. Quoted in Benjamin Forgery, "Battle Won for War Memorials," *Washington Post*, September 20, 1991.

55. Not surprisingly, Lin is not happy with the addition of the women's statue (see "A Memorial Too Many," *Time* [June 27, 1988], p. 25). The congressional bill for the women's statue, signed in 1989, stipulates that it will be the last addition to the memorial, but according to *The Nation*, there are already other groups, such as Air Force pilots, Navy seamen, and Native Americans, who are demanding their own statues, as well as occasional attempts (including one at the time of the initial debate) to erect a flag at the center of the walls' V (see David Corn and Jefferson Morley, "Beltway Bandits," *The Nation* [June 4, 1988], p. 780). Like many other commentators, these writers have mistakenly assumed that these constituents feel left out of the wall. It would appear, however, that it is Hart's statue that makes them feel excluded.

56. Quoted in Mark Bousian, "Women's Viet Memorial Dedicated," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 12, 1993.

57. The original design for the women's memorial, by Roger Brodin, was composed of a single woman standing, cradling a helmet. A model of this statue, "The Nurse," was used for fundraising for the memorial. However, its design was rejected by the Commission of Fine Arts, and a design competition was held in 1990. See Peter Perl, "A Matter of Honor," *Washington Post Magazine* (October 25, 1992), and Marling and Wetenhall, "The Sexual Politics of Memory."

58. Benjamin Forgery, "One Monument Too Many," *Washington Post*, November 6, 1993, p. D7.

59. Laura Palmer, "How to Bandage a War," *New York Times Magazine* (November 7, 1993), p. 40.

60. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 38.

61. Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 168-69.

62. Scruggs and Swedlow, *To Heal a Nation*, p. 93.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 135.

64. Harry Haunes, "What Kind of War?" *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3, no. 1 (March 1986), p. 10.

65. There is also a "battle" being waged between the vendors who work the highly coveted spots between the memorial and the Lincoln Memorial,

selling T-shirts and other items and offering information about the MIAs. This controversy is the result of competition and disagreements over what kind of merchandise should be sold at the site (see Nolan Walters, "Vendors' War Mars Vietnam Memorial," *San Jose Mercury News*, November 11, 1991, p. 2A).

66. No one is buried on the Washington Mall except James Smithson, who is buried at the Smithsonian (see Charles Griswold, "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall," p. 715). The return of bodies from the battlefield is a relatively new historical phenomenon. Many World War I and II American dead are buried in Europe, and it took considerable effort to repatriate the bodies of American dead from Vietnam. There is a long tradition in this country of commemorating the dead in the absence of their bodies, such as those lost at sea. For instance, four memorial headstones at Arlington National Cemetery commemorate casualties from the Persian Gulf War whose bodies were not recoverable.

67. Duncan Spencer, *Facing the Wall* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), p. 51.

68. Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Avon, 1978), p. 111.

69. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 115-16.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

71. The National Park Service estimates approximately 22 million visitors, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund 30 million.

72. Of these other 150 memorials to the Vietnam veterans, Elizabeth Hess notes, "For the most part it is Frederick Hart, rather than Maya Lin, who has managed to set (conservative) aesthetic and ideological precedents for the cloning of the Vietnam memorial. A strong desire to diminish, rather than engage the radical elements in Lin's design is evident in the majority of these new memorials" ("Vietnam: Memorials of Misfortune," in Reese Williams, ed., *Unwinding the Vietnam War* [Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1987], p. 275). Most of these memorials have conventional realist designs, but several stand out in their innovative approaches to commemoration. One project in Wisconsin includes a hundred-acre memorial park and museum for artifacts and memorabilia, and other projects include memorial trees and time capsules (see Hess, "Memorials of Misfortune," p. 276, and Ben A. Franklin, "143 Vietnam Memorials, Vast and Small, Rising around Nation," *New York Times*, November 9, 1986, p. 26).

In Berkeley, California, the Community Memory Project, a public-access computer network, has set up a computer veterans memorial, the Alameda County Veterans' Memorial (see Judy Ronningen, "Volunteers Create a Computerized War Memorial," *Oakland Tribune*, November 11, 1991, p.

A1; and Barbara Sullivan, "A High-Tech Memorial," *Daily Californian*, November 12, 1991, p. 1). Instigated by musician and activist Country Joe MacDonald, it is essentially a database of information about veterans that people can access by categories such as gender, rank, or individual and to which they can add their remembrances.

The design for the Korean Memorial was rejected twice by the Commission of Fine Arts and finally approved in March 1992 (see Sarah Booth Conroy, "Korean War Memorial Design Fails Again," *Washington Post*, October 25, 1991, and "New Revision for Korean Veterans Memorial," *Washington Post*, March 6, 1992, p. B2). The final design includes a black granite wall with a mural of images of support troops such as medics and nurses. An extension of this wall that represents the Korean peninsula bears the inscription "Freedom Is Not Free." See Todd Purdum, "War in Korea, Fast Receding, Gets a Memorial," *New York Times* (July 28, 1995), pp. A1, A18.

73. Michael Clark, "Remembering Vietnam," *Cultural Critique* 3 (Spring 1986), p. 49.

74. By 1987 Hart had received \$85,000 in royalties, much of which had been spent on legal fees suing for copyright infringement (see William Welch, "\$85,000 in Royalties for Memorial Sculptor," *Washington Post*, November 11, 1987, D1, D6).

75. Bobbie Ann Mason's novel *In Country* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), which was made into a film in 1989, is an effective depiction of this fascination by a younger generation for the Vietnam War. The protagonist of the book is a young girl, Sam, whose father died in Vietnam before she was born. She lives with her uncle, who is a veteran. Her attempts to understand the war and somehow to experience it form the central narrative. Fittingly, the book ends with her visiting the memorial with her uncle and grandmother. In a moving scene, they find and touch her father's name, and Sam finds her own name listed for a soldier who was killed: "SAM A HUGHES. It is the first on a line. It is down low enough to touch. She touches her own name. How odd it feels, as though all the names in America have been used to decorate this wall" (p. 245).

76. Evidence of the potential marketing power of the wall can be found in the rather perverse campaigns of two companies, Coors Brewing Company and Service Corporation International (SCI), a funerary and cemetery conglomerate. Both built their own "moving" walls for marketing purposes, against the wishes of the veterans in charge of the traveling memorial. The Coors donated the wall to a veterans organization in Texas. Much to these veterans' chagrin, SCI hired Jan Scruggs as an adviser. See Michelle Guido, "A Wall Divided by Commercialism," *San Jose Mercury News*, March 14, 1991.

77. In addition to Scruggs's book, these books are *The Wall: Images and Offerings from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, by Sal Lopes; *The Last Firebase: A Guide to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, by Lydia Fish; *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, by Michael Katakis; *Facing the Wall: Americans at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, by Duncan Spencer; *Shrapnel in the Heart: Letters and Remembrances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, by Laura Palmer; *Always to Remember: The Story of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, by Brent Ashabanner; *Reflections on the Wall: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, by Edward Ezell; *Let Us Remember: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*, edited by Peter Meyer and the editors of *Life*; a children's book, *The Wall*, by Eve Bunting; and *Offerings at the Wall: Artifacts from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection*, by Thomas Allen.

78. The majority of these objects are left at the wall, though occasionally some are left at Hart's statue and the women's statue. The ritual of leaving objects at the memorial began with its construction. The brother of a pilot killed in the war added his Purple Heart to the concrete as it was being poured.

79. This letter, which accompanied a worn photograph of a Vietnamese man and presumably his young daughter, is depicted in Allen, *Offerings at the Wall*, p. 52.

80. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier would be the most likely location for this kind of ritual, but the presence there of a guard who ritually patrols the site most likely discourages leaving any personal artifacts.

81. The archive is at the Museum and Archaeological Regional Storage facility (MARS) in Lanham, Maryland. The collection also contains blueprints of the design, the mold of Hart's statue, documents and the banner from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, and templates of the name panels.

82. Quoted in Lydia Fish, *The Last Firebase* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane, 1987), p. 54.

83. Laura Palmer, *Shrapnel in the Heart: Letters and Remembrances from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial* (New York: Vintage, 1988), p. 227.

84. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), p. 129.

85. From an interview by author with Duery Felton, Jr., in Lanham, Maryland, August 22, 1991.

86. From a telephone interview with author, June 1, 1995.

87. At least one memorial explicitly memorializes participants in both sides of a war. In Okinawa, a memorial unveiled in June 1995 on the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa contains 234,123 names of all who died in the fighting there. The names, including those of all Okinawans who died

in the war, are divided by nationality and will continue to be added as research continues. This is the only memorial to my knowledge that memorializes both the former enemies and the national dead. See Masae Ishihara, "The Memories of War and the Role of Okinawa in the Promotion of War Peace," paper presented at "The Politics of Remembering the Asia/Pacific War," East-West Center, Honolulu, September 1995.

88. Quoted in Robert Storr, "Chris Burden," *MoMA Members Quarterly* (Fall 1991), p. 5. Storr discusses Burden's work in the exhibition catalogue, *Dislocations* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1991), pp. 26–28.

89. Lauren Berlant, "The Theory of Infantile Citizenship," *Public Culture* 5 (1993), p. 395.

90. The limitations of cultural memory in a nationalist context became particularly clear in the appropriations of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial into the antiwar movement of the Persian Gulf War. As testament to the iconic status of the memorial as a statement about the human costs of war, there were several "Desert Storm Memorial Walls" in evidence at antiwar rallies. Here, the inscription of ten to twenty American names seemed ludicrous in light of reports that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were being killed. Appropriations of the memorial for the Persian Gulf War thus demonstrated both the iconic power of the memorial as well as its limitations.

Chapter Three

1. William Adams, "Still Shooting after All These Years," *Mother Jones* (January 1988), p. 49.

2. Martin Walker, "US Divided over Lessons of History," *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (April 23, 1995), p. 6.

3. Minam Cooke, "Postmodern Wars," *Journal of Urban and Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (1991), p. 29.

4. David James, for instance, notes that the ubiquity of rock-and-roll music in Vietnam War films testifies "that this condition beyond representation exists" ("Rock and Roll in Representations of the Invasion of Vietnam," *Representations* 29 [Winter 1990], p. 85).

5. Herr, *Dispatches*, p. 188.

6. James, "Rock and Roll," p. 87.

7. I do not mean to imply that these were the only films made about the war or that *The Green Berets* was the first. The first American film that was located in Indochina was *Where East Is East* (Tod Browning, 1929). The first that made reference to the civil war in Vietnam was *Saigon* (Leslie Fenton, 1948), with Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake, in which three Air Force veterans end up exposing a money-smuggling plot in Saigon. In *A Yank in Indo-China* (Wallace Grissell, 1952), several Americans are depicted as be-

ing more involved in the war, blowing up a planeload of supplies for the Communists and then being aided by French and Vietnamese forces (a confused plot that surely portends much to come). See Michael Lee Lanning's copious study, *Vietnam at the Movies* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994). The films I have listed here are the most widely seen of those specifically about the war, but there are many other films and many films about veterans—*Billy Jack* (Tom Laughlin, 1971), *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976), *Rolling Thunder* (John Flynn, 1977)—and other, more masked references to the war, most notably the very popular television series *M*A*S*H*, which was a spinoff from the film (Robert Altman, 1969). Although ostensibly set in a military medical outpost in the Korean War, *M*A*S*H* made unmistakable references to the Vietnam War (which was at its height when the film was released), both in its antiwar and irreverent antimilitary stance and its Asian locale (conflating wars fought on foreign land for the ostensible cause of anticommunism). That the film and the television series could not directly represent the Vietnam War within the constraints of Hollywood and commercial television attests to the problems of representability of this war, in particular during the war and in its immediate aftermath.

8. The 1963 photograph by Malcolm Browne of a Buddhist monk immolating himself in Saigon in protest of the war is also an image that could be considered iconic of the war.

9. Douglas Kahn, "Body Lags," in Nancy Peters, ed., *War after War* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1992), p. 44.

10. Robert Hamilton, "Image and Context," in Jeffrey Walsh and James Aulich, eds., *Vietnam Images* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 173.

11. Adams tells his account of the taking of this picture: "All of a sudden, out of nowhere, comes General Loan, the national police chief. I was about five feet away from him, and I see him reach for his pistol. I thought he was going to threaten the prisoner. So as quick as he brought his pistol up, I took a picture. But it turned out he shot him. And the speed of my shutter . . . the bullet hadn't left his head yet. It was just coming out the other end. There was no blood until he was on the ground—whoosh. That's when I turned my back and wouldn't take a picture. There's a limit, certain times you don't take pictures" (Eddie Adams, "The Tet Photo," in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden* [New York: E. P. Dutton, 1985], p. 184). The film of the shooting was taken by an NBC crew that was traveling with Adams. The NBC footage was shown on the "Huntley-Brinkley Report" the following day and seen by an audience estimated at 20 million (Robert Hamilton, "Image and Context," pp. 173–74). Adams found out later that the man who was shot had earlier killed a police major—who was a friend of Loan's—and his entire family. After the incident and the subsequent publicity, Loan was demoted. He later told Adams, "You know, after that happened, my wife