

*Review Essay*

## The Past/Present Vietnam War

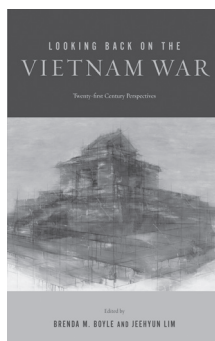
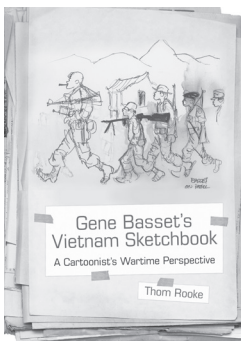
**Roger Chapman**

Because I'm still in Saigon  
Still in Saigon  
I am still in Saigon  
In my mind

—Dan Daley (but sung by the Charlie Daniels Band),  
“Still in Saigon” (1982)<sup>1</sup>

I had to coax Thang and Hau—and later, my other relatives in Vietnam—to reminisce about the war, which had become distant to them. They preferred to focus on the present . . .

—Duong Van Mai, a Vietnamese American (1993)<sup>2</sup>



GENE BASSETT'S VIETNAM SKETCHBOOK: A Cartoonist's Wartime Perspective. By Thom Rooke. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2015.

LOOKING BACK ON THE VIETNAM WAR: Twenty-first Century Perspectives. Edited by Brenda M. Boyle and Jeehyun Lim. Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2016.

The year 2025 will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Fall of Saigon and by that time there may be nothing left to say about the Vietnam War. Piles of books have been published on this conflict. As Thom Rooke explains in the preface of *Gene Bassett's Vietnam Sketchbook*, the books (as well as articles) written about Vietnam “are enough . . . to fill a C-130 Hercules transport plane” (xi). He should have suggested the larger C-5 Galaxy, but his point is understood as he continues: “It seems that any lesson Vietnam can teach has, in some fashion, already been taught” (xii). Meanwhile, the longest American war is no longer the longest, as it was superseded by the “War on Terror” (specifically the “forever war” in Afghanistan, which in 2019 was in its eighteenth year).<sup>3</sup> So lessons taught may have been lessons forgotten, though Heraclitus might say, “No nation ever steps in the same quagmire twice, for it’s not the same quagmire. . . .” It would seem that the events following September 11 would relegate the Vietnam War to the dustbin of academic inquiry, but according to editors Brenda M. Boyle and Jeehyun Lim, in the preface of their anthology *Looking Back on the Vietnam War*, “renewed academic conversations on the legacies of the Vietnam War . . . have emerged with the opening of previously inaccessible archives and the comparisons drawn between the Vietnam and Iraq wars” (5). Why that “old crazy Asian war”—to borrow from a classic country hit by Kenny Rogers—has long been a fixation of American culture, including academic inquiry, is a question yet to be definitively answered.<sup>4</sup>

Rooke’s interest in Vietnam turned out to be happenstance. He befriended an older man, Gene Bassett, who in 1965 spent several months in Vietnam as an editorial cartoonist for Scripps Howard News Service. One day Bassett casually shared with Rooke about his seventy or eighty sketches he did while touring Vietnam and Rooke got inspired to put together a book. Rooke attended the University of Michigan, the birthplace of the antiwar Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), but he was of the class of 1978, the first “post-draft” class (xii). He feels that because he was younger, he “was left with a relatively unbiased perspective” (xi). Probably this is less the case than he realizes, considering that his tabulation of “consequences” of the war includes American war dead (60,000) and American wounded (300,000) while offering no tally of the fatalities and casualties of the other side. The volume by Boyle and Lim, however, turns attention to the lasting impact “on ordinary people” (5) or “the people who experienced the Cold War as a balance of terror” (6). Bassett’s sketches, it can be noted, do at least include some imagery of the Vietnamese. The chapters offered by Boyle and Lim tend to be heavily focused on the Vietnamese diaspora. In actuality, these two quite different works are emblematic of the approach taken in remembering the Vietnam War. Rooke is focused on the war from an American perspective and seeks to preserve a body of memory—the Bassett sketches are primary documents and represent a reproduction of a type of archival material. Boyle and Lim, on the other hand, narrow “ordinary people” to generally exclude American GIs while seeking to remember the war from the vantage point

of Vietnamese in the years of aftermath. When the Boyle and Lim volume does consider American perspectives, it is with the intention to make corrections.

Rooke, a cardiologist and professor of medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, offers engaging prose and interesting analysis, but he approaches Bassett's sketches more with the eye of an antiquarian than a historian. The work he has produced, however, is an excellent example of public history. Syracuse University Press is to be congratulated for taking on this project and allowing it to be published. The Bassett sketches, as Rooke instinctively knew, are a time capsule worth showing to others. Rooke's analysis of those sketches, using the five stages of grief as popularized by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, is very fascinating and creative and also deeply flawed.<sup>5</sup> The author admits that Kübler-Ross' concept "is, admittedly, simplistic" (xxv). But Rooke's work consists of five chapters, one for each grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance),<sup>6</sup> and this is followed by a one-page epilogue. For each chapter, he assembles the Bassett sketches, which were drawn with seemingly rapid scrawl with occasional shading added, that seem to match the corresponding stage of grief. This exercise, of course, is an example of presentism at its worst. Though not scholarly, the assemblage nonetheless works quite well. In the chapter "Denial" there is a sketch entitled *Rude Interruption* showing a rooftop dinner at the Majestic Hotel in downtown Saigon that is "interrupted" by a nearby fire and explosion. One of the people who was seated at the table was the photographer Eddie Adams, who would later win the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for the photo he took of General Loan executing a VC prisoner. Another sketch is of a GI relaxing with his feet propped up while getting a haircut at the military base in Da Nang. The chapter "Anger" includes sketches of a Saigon traffic jam, a cockfight in Cholon, a Vietnamese woman facing away from a leering MP (military policeman), an argument in a market, a contraband inspection of a boat, a scene of a fire with GIs prone to the ground, etc. The remaining chapters follow this format and the accompanying commentary is breezy, engaging, informative, and artful.

In his short epilogue, Rooke muses that sometimes it is not possible to get past grief. He offers a banal observation of some Vietnam veterans suffering "the legacy . . . of unresolved grief, alienation, perpetual anger, intractable fear, alcoholism, drugs, crime, and other predictable consequences" (99). He wonders if it is too late for the broader society to thank those who served or if it is not too late. One would never know by reading this that the most visited memorial in the nation's capital is the one dedicated to the veterans of the Vietnam War. I attended the dedication of that memorial and remember thousands of people, and not just veterans, wishing to affirm the soldiers if not the war itself. Also, I still have my ticket stub from the "Welcome Home" concert held on July 4, 1987 at the Capital Center outside of Washington, D.C.—this benefit concert for the veterans of the Vietnam War featured some of the best performers, including antiwar David Crosby of Crosby, Nash, Still and Young, the group remembered for the angry Kent State requiem "Four Dead in Ohio." The first such benefit concert was held in Los Angeles the year prior.<sup>7</sup> Prior to the end of the war, momentum

had been underway to address the neglect of those who had served in the war.<sup>8</sup> Whether veterans were thanked or not, the legacies of *any* war can leave returning soldiers with negative impressions, as new awareness about PTSD indicates.<sup>9</sup>

Rooke's offering with its fixation on the American aspect of the war is out of step with current scholarship. As Karin Aguilar-San Juan explains, any view that puts Americans' veterans in the middle of the narrative relegates the Vietnamese to the periphery. Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese Americans are now a part of American society and the war is "a central part of recent Vietnamese American memories."<sup>10</sup> But no matter, there will never be universal agreement on anything having to do with the Vietnam War—and this should not be surprising. The note at the front end of Boyle and Lim's *Looking Back on the Vietnam War* offers somewhat of a cautionary warning to anyone who thinks a universal understanding is achievable:

Over the years several different spellings of the country in Southeast Asia that was the site of the Cold War conflict following World War II have appeared in western contexts: Vietnam, Viet Nam, Viet-Nam. Sometimes the spelling is indicative of a political position, and sometimes the spelling adheres to a prevalent form; often "Vietnam" is used as shorthand in the United States for the war, not the country. To distinguish between references to the conflict and the country where it occurred, the introduction [of the book] had adopted two spellings: Vietnam for the war and Viet Nam for the country. Some of the volume's authors do not adopt the same distinction, however. Furthermore, some authors have included Vietnamese language in their essays, to a lesser and greater extent. In both cases, we editors have chosen not to alter their spellings or language choices. (xv)

The statement's underlying meaning suggests the war was so complicated, there is no agreement on the name of the country. For some, a specific way of rendering the name of the country must be different from the name of the war. Also, for some Vietnamese the experience of the war cannot be adequately translated into a different language, which is similar to war veterans who argue that civilians could never understand what the war was really like. Publishing houses are not in agreement on the name of the country; scholars are not in agreement either. Though perhaps a mundane matter, it reminds us of the problem long ago of "the battle of the tables" at the Paris peace talks.<sup>11</sup> The history of the Vietnam War is a history without consensus. (For the sake of simplicity and conventionality, this reviewer uses "Vietnam" whether it is about the war or the country.)

*Looking Back on the Vietnam War* is a collection of eleven chapters, plus an overly detailed timeline, the standard introduction, two appendices (one listing archives and the other a bibliography of pertinent works since 2000), and an index.

Whereas Rooke is easy to read and tends to be folksy, Boyle and Lim's book is the exact opposite. The book's dedication reads: "For those who continue to feel the effects of the Vietnam War" (v), but not all feelings are equally affirmed. The chapters are stand-alone works—but "a constellation" (11), insist the editors—and largely cover diasporic perspectives. Online memorials, writings (novels and memoirs), film, aid organizations, disabled veterans, Agent Orange, boat people, and the Vietnamese war dead whose bodies were never recovered are some of the topics. One exception to the diasporic emphasis is Cathy J. Schlund-Vials' content analysis of "The Back in the Saddle" episode of Marvel Comics' *The Nam* (1986-1993), which she states "renders palpable a vertiginous critique of the war" (171)—which is a sample of some of the heavy commentary. Boyle's chapter "Naturalizing War" offers a sweeping overview of American stories about the war (novels and film productions) while comparing and contrasting earlier narratives with later ones. She is displeased by what she finds: "Thus, the battle [*sic*] for the meaning of the Vietnam War as narrated in the canon's prose and film fictions is less about Viet Nam and the Vietnamese than it is about the emotional states of American characters and audience members" (188).

The Boyle and Lim volume follows a similar kind of anthology, *Four Decades On*, published three years prior.<sup>12</sup> In fact, three of the eleven chapters in Boyle and Lim were authored by contributors of the previous volume, which also consisted of eleven chapters. These writers are Viet Than Nguyen, Heonik Kwon, and Diane Niblack Fox. Apparently a small circle of academics are taking on the huge task of explaining the legacies of the Vietnam War, but there seems to be risk of a hothouse effect. The contributors do at least offer a viable interdisciplinary approach for they work in different academic disciplines, including English, media and cultural studies, ethnic studies, history, anthropology, film studies, American studies, diaspora studies, and Asian American studies. Since legacies are often defined by how people think in retrospect, largely through popular culture, one would hope to have more historians to mitigate the populist tendency of doing short shrift to context.

Viet Thanh Nguyen offers a word on Vietnamese American literary treatments on the war and its aftermath. (In the other volume, he also dealt with postwar literature.<sup>13</sup>) Skeptical of such literary undertakings, he sees expression as perhaps not liberation but a capitulation to the dominant culture's oppression or racism. Interestingly, he himself is a novelist, having won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for the kind of genre he expresses doubts about.<sup>14</sup> He also betrays a certain bias by asserting, "Vietnamese American literature, having given up on revolution, does not offer a radical threat to American mythology" (56). He perhaps should have written that Vietnamese American literature maintains a rejection of communism. What is important about the quote is what it reveals about many academics who are plowing in this field; they have a certain idea on how the past about the Vietnam War should be remembered. Like Boyle openly contends in her chapter, there is a "battle" that must be fought over the Vietnam War. And though Nguyen is correct when he points out that Vietnam-

ese American literature is representative of a higher class far removed from the average Vietnamese peasant, he perhaps exaggerates when he implies that all the peasants left behind in Vietnam are unanimous in belief “that the war was fought ostensibly to liberate and protect them” (57). This position seems to be a Marxist perspective, relegating everything to social class, implying that there can be no commonality between those of different classes. Nguyen, rude it is to point out, is part of the non-peasant class, as are all academics writing on Vietnam, so taking his stance seriously means to question the representation of any anthology no matter its authors Vietnamese ethnicity. Among the Vietnamese diaspora are scholars ensconced at western universities, identifying with their people and writing works that are published by western university presses, but there seems to be little reflection on whether or not the people who remain in Vietnam would be able to identify with what they write. When we read anthologies pertaining to the Vietnam War, we must keep in mind that they are also part of the war after the war. As Nguyen explained of Vietnam War-related literature in the earlier volume, “All wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory.”<sup>15</sup> He is obviously fighting what he thinks is the good fight, but he was four years old when his parents fled from Vietnam and that means he has a perspective based on an indirect memory.

In “Missing Bodies and Homecoming Spirits,” Kwon’s contribution in Boyle and Lim, the Vietnamese remembrance of the war dead, in context with a religious resurgence beginning in the 1990s, is examined. In the Laderman and Martini volume he focused on how the Cold War is/was understood by the Vietnamese, but cautioned, “There is an irony that, in taking into account the view of peripheral actors, the very strength of this approach turns out to be its main weakness because it renders the view unrealistically homogeneous.”<sup>16</sup> These fine details, while important, are like the “battle of the tables” keeping the peace talks from going forward; too many qualifiers and theoretical nuances can block us from ever arriving at perspectives. How the war dead are remembered in Vietnam can be a similar challenge, especially since the government has long focused on the heroic revolutionary sacrifice while the more popular sentiment has been concerned with the reviving of ancestral rituals, compelling “an ethical responsibility to help free these . . . spirits of the dead” (138). More than anything else, Kwon inadvertently demonstrates how the Marxist hope of stamping out perceived “superstition” has largely failed in Vietnam. One sad legacy of the war is the missing bodies, which from the traditional understanding prevents a proper burial “following an appropriate rite . . . to separate the soul from the body” (129).

In her chapter on Agent Orange, Fox regards the suffering caused by this herbicide as a metaphor of the war. Agent Orange was the topic she earlier took up in Laderman and Martini.<sup>17</sup> In her more recent work, Fox shares her 2001 interview of Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Hồng in Biên Hòa, Vietnam. Beginning at age sixteen Hồng was a combatant in the jungle and had often been sprayed with chemical defoliant. She later suffered from liver and other health issues and today four of

her surviving daughters have serious health problems as well. When speaking, she interchangeably refers to “consequences of the war” and “consequences of Agent Orange” (145). As a fighter she at first was aware of the misting, but not until later did her government explain that it was a poison. To Fox the woman states, “. . . all countries that cause war—they must take responsibility, they must give support and help . . .” (147). In 2012, the U.S. National Institute of Health (NIH) linked exposure to Agent Orange with Hodgkin’s disease, cancer of various kinds, Parkinson’s disease, heart disease, and numerous birth defects. Though chemical companies were forced to pay \$180 million to affected Vietnam veterans, nothing was required for Vietnamese veterans.<sup>18</sup> But even Hồng’s own government is preferential, only offering aid to those Vietnamese veterans who fought on the winning side.

With exception to the Fox chapter, writings in Boyle and Lim tend to not integrate the memory of the different participants in the Vietnam War. By and large, works about the Vietnam War focus on one side or the other. During the talk between Fox and Hồng a bond was established. They related to one another because they were women. Fox shared how she had been a war protester: “When you were in the jungle, I was in the streets protesting” (151). This seemed to surprise Hồng. As they were departing, Hồng said, “We can sympathize with each other . . . I hope we will always remember and respect each other” (150). Academics would do well to listen to this wise Vietnamese lady. Fox is also wise in insisting that Hồng’s story is neither representative nor unique, for it is simply a “fragment” (152). There are missed opportunities throughout this volume and others like it. On all sides, dealing with the non-returned war dead has been a poignant reality, so how much richer would Kwon’s contribution been if he had compared and contrasted the Vietnamese and American experiences. The National League of Families POW/MIA flag has long been a fixture of American culture and it is suggestive of anxieties that might be relatable to some Vietnamese.<sup>19</sup> Over the years many American GIs have visited Vietnam to meet with their counterparts; these types of reunions suggest there is overlapping memories—soldiers can always relate to other soldiers.<sup>20</sup> And with the current attention placed on Vietnamese Americans, there should be interest in how H. B. Lee, the first Vietnamese American to command a US Navy destroyer, was ceremoniously welcomed during his official visit to Da Nang, Vietnam.<sup>21</sup>

In the Boyle and Lim volume there is a chapter by Quan Tue Tran on disabled (and diasporic) South Vietnamese veterans, in particular the Disabled Veterans and Widows Relief Association (DVWRA), which was founded in 1992 as an offshoot of the California-based Former Political Prisoner Mutual Assistance Association. By 2014, nearly 30,000 cases were handled by DVWRA. “If the misfortunes and discriminations that disabled South Vietnamese veterans have experienced in postwar Vietnam directly resulted from the defeat of the RVN [Republic of Vietnam],” Tran writes, “then contemporary efforts to assist the former by fellow veterans aboard constitute both an effort to resist the mistreatments of the Vietnamese and an expression of camaraderie, which enable an

attempt to restore the legitimacy of South Vietnamese veterans, citizenship, and nationalism in diaspora” (39). That point is insightful and it is in harmony with the American veterans of the war who were responsible for getting their Vietnam Veterans Memorial built; they too wished to legitimize their service, whether it was the right war or not, and foster comradeship. In the late 1970s the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) was established to engage in outreach and advocacy. In 1986 Green Beret veterans, who had worked alongside the Montagnards, formed the organization Save the Montagnard People Inc. (STMP). The goal of these Vietnam veterans was to not let down their old comrades and their efforts led to a Montagnard community (now known as “The New Central Highlands”) near Asheboro, North Carolina.<sup>22</sup> If operating from an American studies perspective, one would naturally consider how and if the formation of the DVWRA is expressive of American assimilation; that is, how it possibly coincides with Tocqueville’s observation of the American propensity for forming associations.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, very likely a common memory could be detected by comparing and contrasting how on all sides veterans helped one another in the aftermath of the war.

In Lan Cao’s *Monkey Bridge*, the first published novel by a Vietnamese American, the Vietnamese character Mrs. Bay, who runs the Mekong Grocery in the Little Saigon section of northern Virginia, has regular contact with U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War. Near the end of the story the narrator expresses the hope and difficulty of finding a common humanity of those who were in the war, both Vietnamese and American, as well as to the larger American society:

Mrs. Bay laughed [in response to something her Vietnam veteran customer shared]. She sensed a continuing connection with the American soldiers who visited the store, for the simple reason that the common base, she believed, existed to connect us [Vietnamese] exiles, on one point, to these lost men, on another point of the American triangle. We were all trying to make our way from the bottom base toward the unreachable apex, and along the two equal sides of an isosceles triangle; the slope we would have to climb would be a difficult one. But she also genuinely liked him, I believed. Here, in this store, she offered him momentary solace and protection. Here, in this store, he would bring his little piece of a big history with him, and even though it was the not the same as ours, we were in fact parts of a shared experience. We were like two distinctly different shapes that would come together to form an amalgamation of common and at the same time competing truths.<sup>24</sup>

One would think that any focus on the legacy of the Vietnam War would consider the long-term impact of the Hanoi regime’s unflinching resolve to engage in the sacrifice of its people. The “victory at any cost” is deserving of postwar



assessment.<sup>25</sup> Was the victory worth the price of the war, especially since after all these years the victorious Marxist regime is gradually becoming more and more capitalist (beginning in 1986 with Doi Moi economic reforms) while retaining its authoritarianism? Off and on I teach an undergraduate course on the Vietnam War and usually at some point I will express amazement over Hanoi's apparent willingness to keep fighting no matter how many of its people died. The fight did not constitute a "fight or die" scenario simply because the American effort was about defending the South and not defeating the North. The U.S. government would have been content to keep the dividing line at the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, similar to how the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel has long been maintained on the Korean Peninsula. So all of the sacrifice demanded by the North seems inhumane from my perspective. On one occasion there was an exchange student from Vietnam taking my class and with near religious fervor he insisted that there was "no choice" for the North Vietnamese government. I was curious about such expressed fatalism for it reminded me of President Johnson, in his inaugural address, stating, "If American lives must end, and American treasure be spilled, in countries we barely know, that is the price that change has demanded of conviction and of our enduring covenant."<sup>26</sup> So here again is an example of unexamined commonality.

The regime's "victory at any cost" should be shocking and it is worthy of critical examination. What were the fighters fighting for and why?<sup>27</sup> Has there been any legacies of postwar reflection about the price paid for the government gained? The Kronstadt sailors had regrets after the Bolshevik Revolution. Was there any Kronstadt-like regret in Vietnam?<sup>28</sup> Is there a Vietnamese Boris Pasternak or Vasily Grossman of any kind? Well into the 1980s American soldiers were still mulling over what came across to them as North Vietnam's disregard for human life. A PT cadence call refers to an F-4 Phantom jet "flying low" and a "VC village down below." In the ".50 cal pit" (machine gun position) there is "a baby sucking on mama's tit." The song concludes that they "never learn" the lesson: "Napalm sticks to kids, napalm sticks to kids." The song is callous, and maybe it was offering a rationalization about the high civilian death toll inflicted by American forces, but a perception of a people determined to win at any cost.<sup>29</sup> Children, it is true, were on many occasions put unnecessarily in harm's way. Biên Hòa shared with Fox about how during the war she gave birth to her first child out in the jungle. The VC dug military tunnels under villages, daring their foes to attack where civilians were living. Sometimes a child was tasked to approach GIs with a live grenade. Many of the communist fighters were guerillas and by not wearing uniforms they willfully intensified the danger for their civilian population. The "victory at any cost" must have left a psychological legacy in Vietnam, but who is giving it any attention? After the Soviet Union started to unravel, Russians came to have some ambivalence about the Battle of Stalingrad after learning how the Red Army fighters had no choice because if they took one step back Stalin had ordered that they be shot. Do people in Vietnam know enough of their war history in order to even make valid conclusions about the

legacies? Such is a fair question when the new scholarly emphasis on the war is about the Vietnamese perspective.

Though the “battle” of telling the story is ostensibly raging, the anthologies on the Vietnam War tend to be arcane while lacking general accessibility. The narrow foci end up making a fragmented remembrance, reinforcing Fredric Jameson’s observation about Vietnam being “the first terrible postmodernist war,” as Boyle and Lim quote (3), but at the end of their volume we cannot see the jungle from the bamboo. Perhaps this is why the timeline was inserted at the front of the book? By their nature, essay collections by multiple authors tend to be disparate. Over time, it can only be hoped, someone will come along and sift through the many short offerings over the past half century and put together a systematic whole work. Such a project should include an honest critique of the victors, including their reeducation camps (where 400,000 were incarcerated for years), the continual oppression, and the country’s ongoing poor standard of living.<sup>30</sup> The problem is there might not be a readership for such a project, which could easily require more words than the 7,000 pages of the Pentagon Papers. Whatever the legacies of the Vietnam War, most people have largely moved on despite whatever contested legacies.

## Notes

1. Charlie Daniels Band, “Still in Saigon,” in the LP *Windows* (Los Angeles: Sony/Epic Records, 1982).

2. Duong Van Mai, *The Sacred Willow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), as quoted in Marilyn B. Young, John J. Fitzgerald, and A. Tom Grunfeld, *The Vietnam War: A History in Documents* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 160.

3. With the title of his book, George C. Herring dated himself: *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002).

4. From the lyrics of Mel Tillis, “Ruby (Don’t Take Your Gun to Town)” (Santa Monica, CA: Universal Music Publishing Group, 1978).

5. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

6. Rooke’s naming of chapters comes across as a tame version Michael Herr, who in *Dispatches* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), names his chapters “Breathing In,” “Hell Sucks,” “Khe Sanh,” “Illumination Rounds,” “Colleagues,” and “Breathing Out.”

7. The history of these benefit concerts is offered by Jodie Lind Talley, *Beyond the Wall: The Making of the Welcome Home Events for the Vietnam Veterans* (Atlanta: Talley, 2005).

8. Attitude changes were inspired in part by the publication of Murray Polner’s *No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971).

9. For instance, David Shields and Shane Salerno, *Salinger* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), show how J. D. Salinger was lastingly traumatized by what he experienced as an Army officer in WWII. To fully appreciate Salinger’s writings, they suggest, one must consider how the author for years after the war suffered from PTSD. Shields and Salerno quote Stephen Metcalf: “He [the character Holden Caulfield] was the great poet of post-traumatic stress, of mental dislocation brought upon by warfare. Salinger himself broke down under the strain of Utah Beach, and all of his best, most affecting work gives us a character whose sensitivities have been driven by the war to the point of nervous collapse” (553).

10. Karin Aguilar-San Juan, *Little Saigons: Staying Vietnamese in America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 67.

11. Herring, *America’s Longest War*, 265.

12. Scott Laderman and Edwin A. Martini, eds., *Four Decades On: Vietnam, the United States, and the Legacies of the Second Indochina War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

13. Viet Than Nguyen, “Remembering War, Dreaming Peace on Cosmopolitanism, Compassion, and Literature,” in Laderman and Martini, eds., *Four Decades On*, 132-154.

14. Viet Than Nguyen’s award-winning novel is *The Sympathizer* (New York: Grove/Atlantic, 2015).

15. Nguyen, "Remembering War," 132. This same quote is used by Schuland-Vials in her piece on "Back in the Saddle" (chapter 10 of the Boyle and Lin volume, 171).
16. Heonik Kwon, "Cold War in a Vietnamese Community," in Laderman and Martini, eds., *Four Decades On*, 87.
17. Diane Niblack Fox, "Agent Orange: Coming to Terms with a Transnational Legacy," in Laderman and Martini, eds., *Four Decades On*, 207-241.
18. Chris Hedges, "Evidence of Things Not Seen," *Nation*, May 24, 2004, 33.
19. The obsessive concern with MIAs, of course, has been based on distortion and folklore, but I am suggesting a look at all perspectives that have to do with shared legacies of the war. See H. Bruce Franklin, *M.I.A., or, Mythmaking in America* (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1992); H. Bruce Franklin, "Missing in Action in the Twenty-first Century," in Laderman and Martini, eds., *Four Decades On*, 259-296.
20. See Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, *We Are Soldiers Still: A Journey Back to the Battlefields of Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009); Joseph L. Galloway, "Once more, into the valley of Death," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 6, 1993, 32, 34. In 1993, David H. Hackworth made a trip to Vietnam and met with commanders he fought against at the 1969 battle of My Hiep—see David H. Hackworth, "The War Without End," *Newsweek*, November 22, 1993, 44-45, 47-48. Beginning in 2000 the Sage Colleges have led Study Tours to Vietnam, which many veterans have been a part of.
21. Seth Mydans, "U.S. Officer Revisits His Past in Vietnam," *New York Times*, November 10, 2009, A8.
22. Janie Dyhouse, "Montagnards Fine Home in North Carolina," *VFW Magazine*, April 2019, 18-20, 22, 24.
23. See chapter four of volume one of Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J. P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006), 189-195.
24. Lan Cao, *Monkey Bridge* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 209.
25. A definitive biography of the leading North Vietnamese general suggests there was a willingness to engage in sacrifice without limit. See Cecil B. Currey, *Victory at Any Cost: The Genius of Viet Nam's Vo Nguyen Giap* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 1997).
26. Lyndon Johnson, inaugural address, January 20, 1965, in Robert V. Remini and Terry Goloway, eds., *Fellow Citizens: The Penguin Book of U.S. Presidential Inaugural Addresses* (New York: Penguin, 2008), 393.
27. One recalls the Joseph Brodsky poem—"On the Death of Zhukov"—in which the WWII Red Army general meets his men in hell and explains that they were simply fighting to win. See Joseph Brodsky, *Collected Poems in English*, ed. Ann Kjellberg (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 85.
28. In recent times a Vietnamese American was found guilty by a court in Ho Chi Minh City of trying to overthrow the government of Vietnam—"U.S. Citizen Gets 12 Years in Vietnam Prison," *New York Times*, June 25, 2019, A6.
29. I am personally familiar with this song because it was regularly sung during morning PT when I served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Ranger Battalion; I had joined the US Army three years after the Fall of Saigon and many of the senior noncommissioned officers were Vietnam veterans.
30. Young, Fitzgerald, and Grunfeld, *The Vietnam War*, 148. Negative details like these are not part of the Boyle and Lim timeline.