Structures of Fear, Spaces of Hope

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Abstract: Fear, as Mary Douglas long ago observed, is centrally a concern with boundaries and their transgression. In this article, I explore the politics of boundary maintenance and transgression in the cauldron of the American War in Vietnam. Drawing primarily upon the war crimes testimony, memoirs and oral histories of U.S. soldiers and veterans of the Vietnam era detailing their dissent and shifting loyalties, I argue that boundary transgression, contrary to Douglas' influential deep structural analysis, is an important means of establishing countervailing forms of power. Further, the multiple challenges that these soldiers and veterans posed to the expansion of the American empire allow us to view boundaries and transgression not as opposite poles to be contemplated but rudiments of a ferocious encounter between fear and hope.

Keywords: fear, hope, Vietnam War, race, class, internal colonialism, American empire

Résumé : La peur, comme Mary Douglas l'a observé il y a longtemps, a parmi ses enjeux principaux les frontières et leur transgression. Dans le présent article, j'explore les politiques relatives au maintien des frontières et à leur transgression dans le brasier de la guerre américaine au Vietnam. En puisant avant tout dans un un corpus de témoignages, de souvenirs, de récits oraux de soldats et d'anciens combattants américains relatifs à des crimes de guerre commis lors de la guerre du Vietnam, et où ceux-ci révèlent leur dissidence et l'inconstance de leur loyauté, je soutiens que la transgression des frontières, contrairement à l'analyse structurale en profondeur qu'en fait Douglas, si marquante, est un moyen important pour établir des formes de pouvoir en opposition aux pouvoirs prépondérants. Qui plus est, les multiples défis que ces soldats et anciens combattants ont posés à l'expansion de l'empire américain nous permettent de voir les frontières non comme des pôles à mettre en opposition mais comme les rudiments d'une rencontre féroce entre la peur et l'espoir.

Mots-clés : peur, espoir, guerre du Vietnam, races, classes, colonialisme interne, empire américain

Introduction

Perhaps the best way to understand a structure of fear is to situate it in relationship to its dialectic opposite: an emergent structure of feeling, which at least in Raymond Williams' (1977) formulation is associated with a sense of renewal and, yes, hope. Toward that end, as well as to highlight the tension between practical consciousness (what is actually being lived and experienced) and official consciousness (the already articulate and defined) that Williams identified with the emergence of a new structure of feeling, I will begin with a personal vignette. In the latter part of the American War in Vietnam, African American soldiers regularly greeted one another with the black power handshake, which always unfolded in a relatively lengthy and precise choreography of hands and fists. More than a show of solidarity, it simultaneously symbolized a resistance to military authority. One would always engage in this ritualized encounter even before saluting an officer, if a salute was even offered that is. Not everyone engaging in this ritual was an African American, however. Many Chicanos, American Indians, Asian Americans and even white ethnics could be seen among the participants. This polycultural approach to race grew out of sustained conversations about race, class, American society and imperialism among like-minded ground troops, conversations in which, not surprisingly, black soldiers always had the most developed and articulate positions (see Westheider 2006).[1] In my own case, I began to take part in this ritualized greeting as a show of solidarity with the various struggles for liberation that it came to symbolize after engaging in multiple conversations in which the relative and very recent whiteness of Italian-Americans was explained to me in rather elaborate historical detail. As one of my friends said pointedly: "Italians simply are not white. Never really have been. Never really will be." We will leave aside here the ways in which these conversations emphasized the social construction of whiteness decades before academics began to focus on this

issue. I use this anecdote instead to highlight the sheer terror that this crossing of racial boundaries instilled in the military brass and career soldiers, or lifers, who seemed completely unsure about how to—and were at times simply unable to—maintain military discipline when confronted with these transgressions.

The broader implications of these transgressions will, I hope, become clear shortly. For now, this anecdote suggests a starting question: why did the soldiers' crossing of racial boundaries cause such fear among their military superiors? I suggest that the beginning of an answer has to do with the ways in which this transgression upended the structures of fear on which military discipline and, more importantly, military strategy depends. Fear, as Mary Douglas long ago observed, is centrally a concern with boundaries and their transgression. But Douglas took the boundaries separating insiders and outsiders, kin and strangers, allies and enemies to be essentially deep structures, facilitating meditation on the great religious and philosophical mysteries of the ages: "the relationship of order to disorder, being to non-being,...life to death" (1966:5). Yet, as we all know, far too many people are confronted daily with these "mysteries" not in the form of a philosophical riddle, but as a material consequence of dispossession, war and political violence, as well as unequal human and citizenship rights and restricted access to forms of redress and justice. In this paper, then, I begin from what I take to be the dialectical implications of Frederic Jameson's striking insistence that "the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and horror" (1984:57), at once evoking the crushing realities of political repression and terror as well as the possibilities of new social visions and affiliations emerging from and in opposition to these realities. What I want to draw out here especially is the emphasis on boundary transgression as a means of establishing countervailing forms of power and resistance. In this reading, boundaries and transgression are no longer opposite poles to be contemplated but rudiments of a ferocious encounter between fear and hope.

In what follows, I explore the politics of boundary maintenance and transgression in the cauldron of the American War in Vietnam. An adequate understanding of this issue, I suggest, requires both a remapping of the war itself and the U.S. Empire. Towards this end, I will draw primarily upon the war crimes testimony and memoirs of U.S. soldiers and veterans. Although I pursue this topic largely from the vantage point of U.S. soldiers, I hope that the broader implications of my research for expanding our historical understanding of the tensions of American empire building will become evident.

Counterinsurgency in Vietnam

It is well known that the U.S. military's deployment of counterinsurgency warfare in Vietnam was executed through an assortment of atrocities (free-fire zones, search and destroy missions, napalming of villages, air-attacks), displacements (forced urbanization and relocation into strategic hamlets) and ecocide (massive defoliation and crop destruction). This systematic counterinsurgency campaign was intended to produce a generalized sense of fear among the rural villagers and, ultimately, to diminish their support for the revolution.

It is less well known that this relentless deployment of overwhelming military force simultaneously relied heavily on the instillation of fear among U.S. ground troops. For this, rumour, gossip and racialized narratives were centrally important. We all know that dehumanization of the enemy is central to war preparation and execution. But military strategists and trainers know very well that the specifics of dehumanization are critical to its success. Hence it should come as no surprise that from the first days of training, U.S. troops were inundated with rumours of Vietnamese women placing hand-grenades in baby blankets or razor blades in their vaginas, and the oft-repeated story that the Vietnamese, young and old, did not value life—and hence were unafraid to kill or be killed. In case novice soldiers missed the intended "moral" of the story, it was often stated starkly: "the only good 'gook' is a dead 'gook.'" For a generation that had been raised on Hollywood westerns, there was no mistaking the reference. The Vietnamese were the new American Indians. The U.S. military's emphasis on body counts—the obsessive daily tallying and broadcasting of the number of "enemy" killed by U.S. forces—served as grotesque reinforcement of this distorted morality. The rumours and stories with which new soldiers were inculcated thus infused the prevailing orientalist narratives and Old West imagery of the "savage Indian Wars" with their emotional power, encouraging soldiers to fight savagery with savagery.[2]

Circulating these kinds of rumours, gossip and stories was part of the military's attempt to create a climate of fear that could serve as a bulwark for maintaining the cultural and political boundaries between peasants and guerrillas, soldiers and civilians, and friends and enemies. The emphasis of counterinsurgency warfare on displacement, containment, and "pacification" of civilian populations depends critically upon the creation of a sense of fear and hatred among soldiers charged with these tasks (Ahmad 2006). For American war architects, military planners and officers, the erection of these separations and

boundaries was strategic. Truth did not enter into the equation.

Yet in the conventional historiography of the war, the strategy has become the truth and the boundaries have become reified, albeit without all the implications of savagery. For example, there is frequently an assumption in much of the literature on the war that Vietnamese peasant culture was based on an extreme localism. Few peasants, it seems, had the slightest interest in what happened on the other side of the village fence, nor the ability to interpret terms like "democracy, communism, [or] imperialism" (Hunt 2006:79). American soldiers, on the other hand, are attributed with a different form of provincialism, as Marilyn Young (1991:175) suggests in her otherwise nuanced history of the Vietnam War. Thus:

> A Japanese reporter, Katsuichi Honda, understood the distance between American soldiers and the ordinary scenes of Vietnamese rural life they witnessed daily without ever comprehending. It was hard to see a house of mud and thatch as more than a temporary dwelling; hardly a home in the American sense. Rice cultivation—labour intensive, back-breaking, closer to gardening than any farming even soldiers from farm country had ever seen—simply did not register with the troops, for whom neither the labour, nor the crop, nor the people who planted and depended on it were real.

These depictions of the incommensurable differences of "pre-modern" Vietnamese peasants and "modern" American soldiers simply recreate an imperial cartography and genealogy. As such, they work to erase the historical consciousness and agency of both Vietnamese revolutionaries and American soldiers.[3] Given what we know of the vital role of peasants and peasant culture in the Vietnam War, on the one side, and the GI revolt on the other, a healthy dose of scepticism seems appropriate (see Cortright 2005; Hunt 2006; Moser 1996; Wolf 1999). How, one may wonder, were such localist, inward-looking peasants able to actually defeat the world's most powerful military? Or, for present purposes, how were significant numbers of supposedly provincial U.S. soldiers able to identify with the Vietnamese struggle for liberation, and even find ways to work across the lines that divided them? Put differently, how were they able to see beyond the culture of fear created by the military and enter into hopeful dialogue, even if tentatively and discontinuously, with their supposed enemy? The answer to the latter question, I think, can be found in the following outline of the demographics of the conscripted troops and the changing nature of their relationship to the U.S. state. The conclusions I reach, though, are foreshadowed in the opening vignette of the black power handshake. In my understanding, it represented a rejection of the racialized hierarchies of the nation-state, on the one hand, and a respect for *difference*—with the accompanying demand for equality in difference—on the other (see Lefebvre 2005). It was this conception of difference, as it emerged from the struggles and social movements of the 1960s, that allowed a significant number of U.S. soldiers to appreciate and in some instances even identify with the Vietnamese struggle for self-determination.

The Rebel Army of the Poor

It is well known that the obligation to serve in the military during the Vietnam War fell overwhelmingly to the sons of the poor and the working class. It is also well established that a disproportionate number of low-level combat and support troops serving in Vietnam were people of colour (Appy 1993; Cortright 2005; Mariscal 1999; Westheider 1997). It is less well known, however, that this class and racial imbalance resulted from a 1965 Selective Service Agency policy designed to "channel" the working classes into the military and the middle and upper classes into crucial "civilian support occupations"—i.e., professional careers (Tax 1968). Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then assistant Secretary of Labour for policy planning, was the original architect of this program; his proposed solution for what he called the "culture of poverty"—borrowed, of course, from Oscar Lewis–centred on sending the poor, especially young men of colour, off to fight the war. Although we cannot be sure of Moynihan's intentions in drafting these proposals, it is safe to say that their institutionalization by Secretary of Defence Robert McNamara into a program called Project 100,000 (designed to admit 100,000 formerly unqualified men into the armed forces every year) at the apex of the civil rights movement signalled a real distancing of the Johnson administration from the improvements promised by the voting rights and civil rights acts of the mid-1960s (Hsiao 1989; President's Taskforce 1964). Indeed, young civil rights activists and black power militants were often the favourite targets of local draft boards (Westheider 1997). At the same time, this selective service policy also signalled the administration's distancing from the Fordist capital-labour compact, and the imminent end to the limited, but very real privileges enjoyed by the core U.S. working class relative to labourers in other parts of the world economy. In effect, it also ended the promise of future prosperity to other sectors of the U.S. working class that had not yet benefitted from the post-war economy. Young workers coming of age in the 1960s—the very people who were being conscripted into military service—

experienced this displacement and dispossession most sharply, doubly so as stable manufacturing jobs and manual labour jobs began to evaporate at around the same time.

If U.S. counterinsurgency in Vietnam represented the revival of the genocidal methods of colonial warfare, with the brutal pacification of American Indians and the Philippines as its main sources of inspiration, the new selective service policy represented the assertion of colonial rule within the U.S. itself, at least for populations that increasingly bore the status of subjects. The divisiveness of this form of governance both foreshadowed the neoliberal state and reinvented the colonial ethnographic state apparatus, in which select populations were objects of specific government policies, not rights-bearing citizens (see Chatterjee 2004).

As Henri Lefebvre (1969) noted in the immediate aftermath of the events of May 1968 in Paris, this changing relationship between state and subjects represented a more global transformation as capitalism and states readjusted to decolonization in the South by creating internal colonies in the North. Internal colonization was most evident, he argues, in the metropolitan centres of the North, as segments of the population became increasingly separated into ghettos reminiscent of colonial cities. In the U.S. these conditions had longed prevailed. American cities' history of segregation and ghettoization is such that the spatial relations of race and class already looked like internal colonization. Nonetheless, the political implications of the transformation that Lefebvre identified were immediately evident in the U.S., as the state's internal and external enemies became virtually indistinguishable, and the line separating police and military activity in effect disappeared (Parenti 2000). By the mid-1960s, both internal police forces and external military forces were actively collaborating in applying the theories of pacification and counterinsurgency to domestic political problems, such as urban riots and political demonstrations (Ahmad 2006). And ironically, perhaps, these policies were also being applied to rebellious soldiers within the military. Mass incarceration of black soldiers in Vietnam, for example, was a common occurrence, as were stockade riots. The 13-week rebellion and occupation of Long Binh stockade beginning in August 1968, in which over 70 incarcerated black soldiers were wounded by military police, is only the most well-known example (Westheider 1997). The urban riots that rocked U.S. cities in the aftermath of Martin Luther King's assassination thus had their counterparts in Vietnam, as the struggle for civil rights and self-determination among Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans exploded in the middle of the war zone. As dramatically, the infamous Phoenix Program, purportedly charged with assassinating Vietnamese guerrillas, initially targetted U.S. military deserters known to be living among the Vietnamese (Trujillo 1990).

Soldiers in Vietnam often referred to this systematic repression as the "war within the war." It was also obvious that the military brass also considered it a war. For one, the number of rebellious soldiers was staggering. By 1970, much of the Army in Vietnam refused to fight and staged a quasi-mutiny. Two sociological studies conducted for the Army in 1970 and 1971 (Cortright 2005:270) reported that roughly half of the low-ranking Army soldiers were engaged in some form of active resistance. Further, the activists articulated the sentiments of a significant number of soldiers who did not necessarily engage in outright resistance (Moser 1996). If we consider that by 1968 there were 500,000 U.S. troops stationed each year in Vietnam alone, the GI revolt constituted one of the most significant social movements of the 1960s, with roots in and inspiration from a variety of political streams, such as the black power, peace, labour and national liberation movements.

We can begin to see here the many points in which a sense of common struggle and humanity could have developed between dissident GIs and Vietnamese insurgents. This recognition was registered in GI folklore and rumours of U.S. soldiers *crossing over* to fight with the National Liberation Front (Mariscal 1999; Rees 1979). A common rumour featured "Salt and Pepper," two marines who, according to soldier lore, *crossed over* and continuously evaded capture (Holguin 1990). It is also registered figuratively by many veteran-writers of the Vietnam War as a process of either crossing over "enemy" lines or by imaginatively becoming the enemy or the *Other* (Cano 1995; Durden 1976; Franklin 1997; Lee 1977; O'Brien 1977; Roth 1973; Rottman 1997).

Here we see that military strategists and officers did not have a monopoly on the circulation of gossip, rumour and stories. But in the soldiers' stories, the shared history of exploitation and oppression underlining these narratives of recognition is always evident. As one stockade prisoner replied when asked by a journalist about the attitude of black soldiers toward the war:

> I feel that the black man's attitude is that the war in general is one of genocide toward the coloured people of the earth in general, in that the military can kill two birds with one stone. There is a little bit of fear...inside the black serviceman's makeup but it is slowly and surely disappearing. [Harvey 1969:9]

In Daniel Cano's (1995) *Shifting Loyalties,* a multiple-protagonist work of Chicano social fiction, the desertion of Jesse Pena and his crossing over to fight with the National Liberation Front (NLF) becomes an occasion for his friends to consider his actions through the prism of their own history of oppression. After discussing the impoverished conditions of Pena's childhood in the Southwest, conditions that in many ways resembled those of the Vietnamese peasants, one of the friends articulates the group's sentiments: "so now they send him here to fight for his country, for his land! Wow, what a joke man." In both cases, we see the growing identification of some U.S. soldiers, especially soldiers of colour, with the Vietnamese and their anti-colonial struggle.

In the latter part of the war, this recognition of a common struggle and humanity was expressed in informal truces between U.S. soldiers and Vietnamese guerrillas. NLF and North Vietnamese soldiers were known to refrain from firing upon U.S. troops displaying red bandannas, black power armbands, peace signs, or wearing a Vietnam Veterans against the War button, unless the Americans opened fire first. The sense of mutual recognition evident here is vividly illustrated in the recollection of Greg Payton, an African American soldier:

> We were walking in this high grass and we saw the grass moving so you knew somebody else was in the grass. We got to a clearing; it was the Vietcong, they had weapons...They looked at us. We looked at them. They went that way. We went this way. That was the end of that. There was identification, man. Oppression is a universal kind of thing. [Moser 1996:54]

As may be expected, this "structure of recognition" (Mariscal 2006) was also expressed in a range of class-based, anti-imperialist and self-determination struggles by Vietnam-era military veterans (Helmer 1974; Johnson 1996; Lembcke 1998; Stacewicz 1997; Strayer and Ellenhorn 1975). Many Native American, African American and Latino veterans, among others, self-identified as members of a colonized people, and figured prominently in a host of liberation and self-determination movements within U.S. borders: the 1969-71 *Indians of All Tribes* invasion of Alcatraz Island, the Black Panther Party (BPP), American Indian Movement (AIM), and El Comite, among others. And a number of veterans—such as John Trudell (Alcatraz, AIM), Geronimo Pratt (BPP), Bill Means (AIM) and Federico Lora (El Comite)—became public figures through their participation and leadership in these movements.[4]

For some movement activists, the connection between the struggles on different sides of the world was espe-cially heightened during moments of fear and danger. Witness the reflection of a Vietnam veteran activist who participated in the AIM occupation of Wounded Knee. While hiding in a ravine to avoid being caught in the bright spotlight of a U.S. military armoured personnel carrier, he has an epiphany:

> Suddenly a popping sound punctuated the night. I was shocked–I knew that sound. I had heard it every night for twenty months in Vietnam as the security forces defended the air base at Da Nang, unleashing flares to light up the Vietnamese night to see if Victor Charlie (code for Viet Cong) was coming through the concertina wire. In that moment in the ravine, I realized the United States military was looking for me with those flares. I was the gook now. No wonder the Vietnamese, looking at the Indian tattoo on my arm, had presciently told me, You same same Viet Cong. I damn sure was. [Kipp 2004:126]

Alfredo Vea, the author of the magical realist novel *Gods Go Begging* (1999), similarly draws upon his military experience to situate devastated U.S. inner cities and destroyed Vietnamese villages within a common history and geography. In a crucial scene, he recounts a comparable moment of recognition between a Chicano soldier and a North Vietnamese Army prisoner:

> After a long moment of immobile silence on both sides of the wire, the NVA soldier smiled broadly... then reached up to grab a shock of his own hair. With his other hand, he pointed to the American sergeant. "You same-same me," he said in pidgin. His voice was high pitched and musical. War had not altered his civilian timbre. He released his hair, then ran his fingers over the brown skin of his cheek, then over his brown, sunburned forearm. "You same-same me," he repeated. [Vea 1999:79]

The pidgin English was quickly dropped as they both realized they both spoke French. Immediately the conversation became more personal, with each understanding that they shared the wish to find a cosmopolitan place to live, a place where the boundaries of culture and difference are truly permeable. The NVA prisoner addresses the American soldier again:

> You must go to Marseille someday. The port is magnificent. From the hills above the sea it is easy to imagine the Crusaders leaving in their wooden boats for the Holy Land. Sit in the coffee shops or on one of those green benches...and just listen, just listen. Marseille is great simply because of all the people like you and I who must go there. It is beautiful because emissaries

of separate countries have conferences at every café. There are cultural exchanges in every doorway. Besides...Paris is too cold for dark people like you and me. [Vea 1999:82]

So much for Vietnamese localism!

It is important to emphasize here that this structure of recognition was not in any way limited to dissident soldiers. It is clearly evident in the best known and widely read memoir of the Vietnam War, Tim O'Brien's (1990) *The Things They Carried*. O'Brien's meditation on the war and his involvement in it touches a chord with a wide range of readers. And, if my children, nieces and nephews are any indication, it is the one book about the Vietnam War that is regularly assigned to every succeeding cohort of U.S. high school students. The key passage for present purposes occurs in the chapter, "The Man I Killed," as O'Brien imagines the common feelings and hesitations he shared with the man he killed many years earlier. Earlier in the memoir O'Brien recounts how it was fear of being thought a coward and the dread of being ostracized from his community, not bravery nor a belief in the mission, that influenced his decision to enter the military, and not to evade the draft and escape to Canada as he secretly wished to do. "I was a coward," he writes, "I went to war" (1990:61). In a later chapter, these same sentiments are ascribed to the Vietnamese man he fatally confronted in battle: "Beyond anything else, he was afraid of disgracing himself, and therefore his family and village. But all he could do, he thought, was wait and pray and try not to grow up too fast" (1990:127).

Remapping the World

In the varied movements, mutinies, testimonies and imaginative writings of U.S. soldiers and veterans that I have presented here, the experience of black prisoners, Vietnamese peasants, Chicano farm workers and dispossessed urban dwellers are linked as different local instances in a struggle against U.S. imperial power. A highly explicit articulation of this revised conception of the world was presented during the 1971 Winter Soldier Investigations in Detroit, an unofficial war crimes tribunal organized by Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). During the "Third World Panel," to give just one example, discussions of the rampant police violence and economic dispossession then shattering communities of colour within the U.S. were linked directly to the devastation of Vietnamese communities as the overlapping effects of U.S. imperial rule (VVAW 1971). Much like W.E.B. Du Bois' (1999) concept of the world colour line, the juxtaposition of these dispersed instances of oppression, exploitation

and terror created a counter-geography of belonging and connection in the world among a multiplicity of subject positions always already constituted as different within and between reigning structures of power. It was this transgression of racial, ethnic and national boundaries that so effectively upended the military structures of fear during the Vietnam War.

These transgressions, in effect, were arguments-in-action against state power, new imperialisms and internal colonialism. They were not arguments for homogeneity. As mentioned earlier, the right to difference was a central political demand of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet the difference evoked here is not the radical alterity of postcolonial scholarship. The instances of "crossing-over" and "becoming the other" described above identified commonalities within difference. In identifying the commonalities of political aspirations across a range of struggles and socio-economic conditions, it may be said that dissident soldiers and veterans were involved in mapping what David Harvey (2000) recently called "spaces of hope" in the global struggle for expanded human rights and liberation.

The cartography of these "spaces of hope" emerged, I suggest, from the dissident soldiers' ongoing refusal of imperial and state classifications. For one, it was a refusal to name the Other as barbarian, a rejection both of national allegiances and of global racial and cultural hierarchies. It was a refusal also to name themselves as Other, a redefinition of the racial oppositions and class fragmentations inhering in the nation. Raymond Williams' idea of a structure of feeling provides a useful framework for understanding the dissident soldiers' embrace of a provisional namelessness. As I mentioned in the introduction, Williams' distinction between practical consciousness (what is actually being lived and experienced) and official consciousness (the already articulate and defined) helps us see the emergent possibilities of this refusal of classifications. There is frequent tension, Williams argues, between received interpretation and practical experience. "There are experiences to which the fixed forms do not speak at all, which indeed they do not recognize. There are important mixed experiences, where the available meaning would convert part to all, or all to part" (1977:130). In the absence of adequate frames for understanding experience, the tension between meanings and values as they are actually being lived and the already articulate and defined is especially pronounced, provoking on occasion new modes of thinking and feeling (Williams 1977:131).

The previous examples of mutual recognition—"crossing over," becoming the "Other," refusing "names"—thus,

from my perspective, represent telling moments in the emergence of a new structure of feeling. At the same time they infuse Williams' concept with greater spatial breadth and historical depth than it is usually afforded. Williams' analysis seems tacitly set within the nation, and focused primarily on changing relationships between and within national classes. Still, the highly fraught encounter between lived experience and established meaning that Williams attributes to the emergence of a new structure of feeling makes it, I think, a profoundly useful tool for understanding the "cosmopolitan culture mixing" that emerged in the cauldron of the Vietnam War.[5] According to Tarak Barkawi (2006:78), soldiers' creative encounters with difference during wartime frequently lead to "reassessments of home." I would add here that these reassessments are often not just of "home," but of the seemingly static distinctions of "self" and "other" used to justify combat in the first place, thus fostering a greater appreciation of what Edward Said (1994) calls the intertwined histories and overlapping geographies of subalterns in the North and South.

In refusing imperial and state genealogies, the dissident soldiers and veterans were seemingly articulating a provisional internationalism, in Timothy Brennan's (2003) sense of issuing a proposal for international solidarity in advance of securing the necessary political, cultural, or organizational forms for its realization. Premature though it may have been, this proposal did highlight the need for creating links between a range of struggles both within and across national borders to counter the expanding and genocidal reach of the U.S. empire. In their disavowal and transgression of both colonial and national boundaries and classifications, then, these dissident soldiers and veterans presciently offered us a glimpse of how a map of the world may be redrawn, one that traces the connections of disparate people subjected to the globalized American model of governance, or what we now once again call imperialism. Such a map of the relations of connection and affinities of the dispossessed, insecure and terrorized would be an important and urgently needed step in the creation of a countervailing culture of creativity and possibility to the structure of fear and chaos erected by U.S. military imperialism. Although long suppressed, the enduring legacy of the GI resistance to the American War in Vietnam rests in it being an important example of how spaces of hope can emerge from within imperial structures of fear and occasionally even transcend them.

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Notes

1 I borrow the idea of polyculturalism from Vijay Prashad (2001:xii), who insists that people's cultural identities are drawn from a host of lineages. "The task of the historian," he writes, "is not to carve out the lineages but to make sense of how people live culturally dynamic lives."

2 Michael Taussig (1984) developed a useful framework for thinking about the relationship between violence and rumour in an early and influential article, but tended to analyze only the discourse of the colonializers, not the colonized. But David Hunt (2006) showed how the informal "grapevine" among villagers, market vendors and revolutionary cadres in the Vietnamese province of My Tho fostered a political cosmopolitanism among local people, who clearly understood the universal significance of their anticolonial struggle.

3 As a counter to these localist assumptions, I will point to the wide-spread cosmopolitanism of peasant insurgents that David Hunt (2006) has documented in his study of village study sessions and neighbourhood meetings; and to the U.S. Vietnam-era veterans who travelled to North Vietnam during the last years of the war to establish an international "peoples diplomacy" (Singh 1998; Stacewicz 1997).

4 See, among others, Churchill and Vander Wall 1990; DeMeyer 1998; Johnson 1996; Singh 1998; Torres and Velazquez 1998.

5 The idea of "cosmopolitan culture mixing" was developed by Tarak Barkawi (2006:77) in his primer on *Globalization and War.*

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