

CHRISTINA SCHWENKEL

Exhibiting War, Reconciling Pasts: Photographic Representation and Transnational Commemoration in Contemporary Vietnam

In April 2000, in celebration of the “twenty-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the south and the reunification of the country” [*kỷ niệm hai mươi lăm năm ngày giải phóng miền nam, thống nhất đất nước*], the War Remnants Museum in Hồ Chí Minh City opened a two-week international photography exhibit entitled Requiem—The Vietnam Collection [*Hồi Niệm—Bộ Sưu Tập Ảnh về Chiến Tranh Việt Nam*].¹ The exhibit displayed the works of 135 photojournalists from eleven nations killed in action between 1954 and 1975 in the wars in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. This article will use the Requiem exhibit as a case study to map out the diverse and often divergent historical truths and visual records of war that the images in the collection produced when juxtaposed next to one another. I compare and contrast the representational practices of revolutionary and nonrevolutionary photojournalists, calling attention to the discordant ways in which Vietnamese subjects are constituted (or not) as historical agents.

In what follows, I seek to contribute to a small but growing body of literature on Vietnamese-produced images of war and their diverse social and cultural meanings.² Until recently, scholarship has primarily analyzed US popular memory and cultural productions that evoke the Vietnam War.³ This trend is also seen in research on war and the mass media, which has

Journal of Vietnamese Studies, Vol. 3, Issue 1, pps. 36–77. ISSN 1559-372x, electronic ISSN 1559-3738. © 2008 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press’s Rights and Permissions website, <http://www.ucpressjournals.com/reprintinfo.asp>. DOI: 10.1525/vs.2008.3.1.36

focused almost exclusively on non-Vietnamese correspondents and their journalistic practices and representations of Vietnam.⁴ In recent years there has been growing interest in the United States in stories from “the other side,” that is, from Vietnamese, revolutionary photojournalists whose work had previously circulated within transnational socialist networks but was little known in the United States.⁵ Encouraged by the mounting international attention to their work, several Vietnamese war photographers subsequently published collections of their own work with Vietnamese publishing houses in either book form or as postcard collections.⁶ These bilingual (Vietnamese-English) and sometimes trilingual (Vietnamese-French-English) texts are sold today in Vietnam in urban bookstores and, occasionally, in tourist areas for upwards of 250,000VNĐ, thus signifying popular trends in the international consumption of memories of the war,⁷ as well as intensified domestic consumption of diverse wartime images and narratives.⁸

Visual images of the war in both US and Vietnamese media have powerfully shaped both historical memory and ensuing struggles over meaning.⁹ As scholars remind us, all journalistic images of warfare, regardless of the photographer, are produced within certain structural and ideological frameworks and offer only partial and situated insights rather than transparent historical truths and accuracies. Barbie Zelizer, for example, has used the case of Holocaust photography to rethink the trope of witnessing and the use of images as historical evidence.¹⁰ Likewise, photographs of the war in Vietnam (from all sides) provide only fragmented knowledge of wartime violence and select glimpses into its complexities. Moreover, the meanings and significance of such images are never fixed but shift according to various contexts of viewing and new interpretations of the past.¹¹ It is perhaps unsurprising that photojournalists who supported the revolution told very different war stories through their images. Yet analyses of their collections, as well as of their photographs on display in *Requiem*, show that these men and women were not only involved in the production of news, but they were also photographer-ethnographers who documented the everyday, mundane aspects of life in wartime. Contrary to representations of violence and suffering portrayed in the United States, and in Western media more broadly, Vietnamese photographs reveal to the viewer a broad array of combat experiences that include but are not limited to the trauma and

destruction of war. That is, rather than focusing exclusively on atrocities and death, their images also provide insights into the more sanguine and leisurely moments in war, and occasionally even the fleeting romantic encounters that photographers caught on film. Vietnamese photographers thus bring our attention to the specificities of everyday lives under the threat of violence as the boundaries between the ordinary and the violent became increasingly blurred.¹² This visual history contrasts sharply with the graphically violent photographs of the war that were published in the Western press (and also displayed at *Requiem*), thus challenging implicit assumptions that suffering is the fundamental social experience and core representation of war.

In addition, this article situates war photography in general, and the *Requiem* photographs in particular, within changing landscapes of memory, entangled in the politics of reconciliation and neoliberalization. Recent scholarship on Vietnam has been attentive to diversified and competing recollections of the past, particularly under post-Cold War conditions of economic and political liberalization.¹³ According to Hue-Tam Ho Tai, “[T]he decline of High Socialist orthodoxy, relative prosperity, and prolonged peace have encouraged other actors besides the state to try to occupy the space of memory. . . . The deconstruction of the official past is thus an untidy, somewhat surreptitious, seldom openly confrontational by-product of economic reconstruction.”¹⁴ As I demonstrate below, these “other actors” often extend beyond the Vietnamese nation-state to include international participants who also contribute to reworking and re-presenting Vietnam’s past. *Requiem*, with its vast repertoire of images that convey distinct ways of recollecting and representing the war, thus signifies the increasing transnationalization of historical memory and knowledge that is less about challenging official history than contributing to its diversification.

Attention to transnational practices involved in the production of historical memory at the exhibit reveals tensions and negotiations in processes of normalization and reconciliation between the United States and Vietnam. Through its juxtaposition of work from the “winning” and “losing” sides of the war, *Requiem* created a multifaceted, transnational space of historical reflection and knowledge production. Yet this was not an unbounded site for reconfiguring and reconciling the past. Historical memories, knowledge, and

sensibilities were shaped and delimited by negotiations between Vietnamese and US-based organizers with regard to the selection, arrangement, and display of exhibit materials. In what follows I argue that the diverse visual records of revolutionary and nonrevolutionary photographers killed in the wars not only suggested distinct styles of representation and remembrance. When exhibited alongside one another in the context of post-reform Vietnam and analyzed against the backdrop of shifting US–Vietnam relations, the images and their accompanying texts resurrected and reproduced several competing political convictions and ideological beliefs central to the war that still circulate in certain public spheres today.

Requiem—The Vietnam Collection

In April 2000, scores of international journalists descended upon Vietnam for the twenty-fifth anniversary of end of the “anti-US resistance for national salvation” [*kháng chiến chống Mỹ cứu nước*] that occurred on April 30, 1975. In Hồ Chí Minh City, journalists flocked to old wartime haunts, such as the Rex Hotel, previously known for its “five o’clock follies,” and the Caravelle, now a premier five-star accommodation. The excitement of the occasion was propelled by nostalgic visions of wartime Sài Gòn and the return of celebrity veteran correspondents. US media were there not only to cover government-organized events marking the anniversary but also to discover what had become of Vietnam since the “fall of Saigon.”¹⁵ For the US press, Vietnam ceased to remain a country of newsworthy interest when it ceased to exist as a war.¹⁶ As Nora Alter has argued, “It is as if Vietnam had no history before the American occupation and none thereafter.”¹⁷ Post-1975 cultural production of social memory in the United States largely revolved around oral histories and cinematic representations that reinforced narcissistic myths of the war as a US tragedy, hampering public discourse about postwar reparations and responsibilities.¹⁸ That the Vietnamese people were left to recover from a devastating war and rebuild their nation was conveniently forgotten by the US public, as well as the press. The barrage of media coverage of the twenty-fifth anniversary subsequently put Vietnam back on the front pages of the US press in magazines such as *Newsweek*, *People*, and *US News & World Report*.

Hồ Chí Minh City celebrated April 30, 2000, with a series of political and cultural events. Outside the Reunification Palace on Lê Duẩn Boulevard, an early morning parade commemorating Vietnam's military victories, as well as its recent economic progress, launched the day's events. Afternoon and evening festivities in the city center marked a shift from political to cultural production, with unicorn dances, acrobatic and drumming performances, fashion shows, and music concerts. These events predominantly attracted Vietnamese spectators, including families and groups of youths, who gathered in the streets to enjoy the revelry.

On May 5, as part of the ongoing anniversary events, the War Remnants Museum in Hồ Chí Minh City opened the exhibit *Requiem—The Vietnam Collection*. This exhibition was based on the 1997 book, *Requiem—By the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina*, edited by Horst Faas and Tim Page, two photojournalists who had covered the war in Vietnam and who had now returned for the twenty-fifth anniversary.¹⁹ *Requiem—The Vietnam Collection* had been organized and assembled by the Kentucky Requiem Project Steering Committee, chaired by Richard Lennon, a veteran Marine Corps officer who had served in the war in Vietnam in 1968, in collaboration with Horst Faas and the Indochina Photo Requiem Project, Ltd.²⁰ The exhibit, containing 275 photographs, was first shown at the Kentucky History Center in Frankfort, Kentucky, from October 1 until November 14, 1999, after which it was packed into fourteen crates and flown to Vietnam. Working in conjunction with the Vietnam News Agency and the Association of Vietnamese Photographic Artists, the fifteen-person Kentucky Requiem Project Steering Committee had secured the necessary financial support to bring the exhibit to Hà Nội, where it opened to large crowds on March 10, 2000.

Requiem was distinct from other anniversary events taking place in Hồ Chí Minh City. As a transnational memorial that honored war correspondents regardless of nationality, political orientation, or press affiliation, it presented a united front of journalists who died in pursuit of "truth." This is significant insofar as it provided a space for the public recognition and remembrance of nonrevolutionary southern Vietnamese casualties who had been excluded from official historical narratives and state commemorative ceremonies in Vietnam. It was also a space for US viewers to commemorate

Vietnamese (rather than only US) fatalities, particularly those of rival forces. Moreover, with its theme of “hope, healing and history” [*hy vọng, hàn gấm và lịch sử*], the exhibit reflected the efforts and desires of the people of Kentucky to reconcile the past and rebuild collaborative relations between the United States and Vietnam. At the opening ceremony in Hồ Chí Minh City, Horst Faas announced that the collection of photographs would be presented to the Vietnamese people “as an offering of peace” from the citizens of Kentucky.²¹ Deeply rooted in a discourse of shared memories and shared sorrow, such healing projects have become increasingly more commonplace in Vietnam as new practices of “transnational memory making” have created unconventional monuments, such as peace parks, primary schools, and friendship forests.²²

The ceremony to launch the exhibit took place in the courtyard of the War Remnants Museum on a hot and humid morning at 9:30 a.m. There were roughly one hundred people in attendance, most of whom were family members of the deceased photojournalists and Vietnamese reporters covering the event. Approximately one dozen representatives from the international press were also present, as well as a few curious tourists who happened to be visiting the museum at that time. In the front row, under a blue canopy that shielded attendees from the glaring sun, sat Horst Faas and Tim Page between city government officials, representatives from the museum, and an infirm, state-titled heroic mother. Next to the podium was an ensemble of twenty male musicians clothed in white, starched uniforms, their instruments at their sides. The first speaker, a city official, reflected on the numerous projects to promote peace that had taken place in recent years. “We must put aside the past,” he urged, “but each April 30 the memories return.” Mention was made of the 135 war correspondents killed and the sacrifices they had made. The official called for a moment of reflection at two different points in his speech: the first for former Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng, who had passed away a week before on April 29, and the second, for all the deceased photojournalists. The latter moment was accompanied by a soft and melodious tune in honor of the dead.

Horst Faas then took the podium and stressed that the war had taken place not only in Vietnam but also in Cambodia and Laos. The exhibit was not about nostalgia, he told the audience; rather, it was a “permanent

memorial” meant to celebrate the photographers and their achievements. References to “us” and “the communists” peppered his speech, reducing the complexities of the war and the convictions of the photographers to binary opposites: communist and noncommunist. At one point Faas spoke of the distinct photographic techniques used by “us” and “them,” but “these differences were removed when they shared the fate of death.” The collective deaths of the photojournalists thus signified the potential for total reconciliation and transcendence of “difference” to which the organizers aspired.

Requiem was hailed as the first international photo exhibition to display “both sides” of the war. This communist—not communist simplification, evident in Faas’ opening speech, was further buttressed by the division of war correspondents into two categories: those who worked for the Western press, for example, the Associated Press (AP) or the United Press International (UPI), and those who worked for the revolutionary press, such as the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) or the Liberation News Agency (LNA). In a classificatory scheme originally espoused in the book by Faas and Page, photojournalists from the revolutionary press were identified as belonging to the country “Vietnam.” Nonrevolutionary Vietnamese correspondents who worked for the Western press were grouped under “South Vietnam,” which was included with a list of foreign countries that lost photographers: France, the United States, Japan, Austria, Britain, Australia, Switzerland, Cambodia, Germany, and Singapore.²³ As will be demonstrated below, the distinct ideological underpinnings of the Western press and Vietnamese press gave shape to vastly different subject formations and visual records of the war.

Paradoxes and Moral Dilemmas in Western Photojournalism

Since the Crimean War in the mid-nineteenth century, cameras have been present to document warfare and record combat.²⁴ However it wasn’t until the Vietnam War that photography was identified as a powerful tool that swayed public opinion in the United States. In what was called the “first living room war” (and, it seems, the last), media coverage of dead American—and to a lesser extent Vietnamese—bodies, burning villages, and graphic violence fueled the antiwar movement and arguably reversed public sentiment on the war.²⁵ Disturbing images from the war proved difficult to forget,

and many photographs took on a fetishized role as cultural or political icons, or as symbols of the inhumanity and futility of war. This has been the case, for example, of the indelible photograph by Huỳnh Công (Nick) Út of Phạm Thị Kim Phúc—the young Vietnamese girl who ran down the street toward the photographer, screaming as her body burned with napalm.²⁶ Such cultural representations of war have been imprinted in US minds, and they continue to resurface in new contexts, “subject to a range of appropriations that comprise a continuing negotiation of American public culture” and a “continuing struggle over the meaning of the Vietnam War.”²⁷

Scholars have argued that rather than arousing empathy, repetitive exposure to media images of violence may in fact desensitize and disengage the viewer. The media onslaught of images of human tragedy, they argue, often turns the grief and anguish of others into “infotainment,” that is, commercialized and commodified representations of suffering and trauma that dehistoricize and depersonalize violence.²⁸ Overexposure to these mediated experiences inadvertently sets higher standards for newsworthy events—more risky, more dramatic, more sensational—eventually culminating in “compassion fatigue” marked by boredom and disinterest.²⁹ Herein lies the paradox of photography: images intended to elicit compassion and spread knowledge about complex structures of violence may lead to indifference, inaction, or amnesia. In his comparative work on television images of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq, Andrew Hoskins links this process to the “collapse of memory.” He writes: “[H]arrowing photographs and footage may endure in memory, but the circumstances of those images and the story they once told become detached through their repetition and familiarity.”³⁰ This is not to deny the power of photojournalism to convey certain knowledges about war or to stir social consciousness and mobilize political subjectivities, as debated in the literature on Vietnam and the mass media.³¹ However, as a visual modality of power, the camera risks objectifying and depoliticizing its subject—as I argue below with regard to representations of tormented and abused Vietnamese bodies in the Western press—even while its images may also heighten moral awareness and public criticism.

The intersections of photography and social suffering inevitably invoke a moral quandary about the political and moral responsibilities of witnessing. A journalist’s decision to photograph a moment of death or to capture terror

and anguish on film raises complex ethical issues, as there is an paradoxical participation—taking the picture—through a lack of participation—not offering to help but recording the act. In an ethnography of foreign war correspondents in El Salvador, Mark Pedelty describes reporters’ “near-addiction to violence” as they greedily photograph a corpse: “For these ‘participant observers,’ violence is not a matter of ‘values’ in the moral sense of the term, but instead ‘value’ in the economic. They need terror to realize themselves in both a professional and spiritual sense, to achieve and maintain their culture identity as ‘war correspondents.’”³² Indeed, combat photographers are often rewarded for their professionalism and ability to maintain composure when confronted with atrocities and devastation. Award-winning photographs of war are valued for their candid, shocking subject matter precisely because the photographer chose for a brief moment not to get involved but to take a picture that could then be widely disseminated to inform others. Denise Chong, for example, describes the reactions of the photojournalists who witnessed Kim Phúc’s agony and burning body—their desire to help compromised by concerns with deadlines and competition.³³ Such momentary expressions of self-interest are indicative of the neoliberal cult of objectivity that motivates much Western, especially US journalism, reflecting the belief that an “objective” and uninvolved stance is needed to produce informed, “balanced” (and hence profitable) news.

The Western journalist’s role as detached moral witness is closely linked to a sensationalized idea of war zones as masculinized spaces of risks, thrills, and brushes with death that break with the monotony of everyday life.³⁴ In Vietnam, this world of “living on the edge” was largely contingent upon the exclusion of female correspondents from the field (of the 135 war correspondents killed in the wars in Vietnam, only 3 were women: Lê Thị Năng and Ngọc Hương from Vietnam, and Dickey Chapelle from the United States³⁵) and upon subjectivities shaped by masculine discourses of adventure, danger, and fearlessness. In literature on Vietnam, this is most apparent in Michael Herr’s *Dispatches*, which narrates an archetypal male journalist’s zealous immersion in the war.³⁶ Such journalistic vigor also surfaced at the Requiem exhibit in a passage that provided an overview of photography during the war: “Some [Western photographers] stayed on for the glory, the money, the thrill. Others returned, again and again, because it was the place

to be.”³⁷ Western photojournalist subjectivities are thus represented as closely entangled with the valuation (if not the fetishization) of risk and atrocity, their work dependent upon the suffering bodies that become the photographic object of their “thrill.”

Vietnamese Photographic Practices and Representations of War

During wartime, the roles, practices, and subjectivities of Vietnamese correspondents who supported the revolution differed considerably from those of foreign reporters. While most journalists for the Western press were in Vietnam on a voluntary basis and could walk away from the battlefield and Vietnam if they so desired, the freedom to leave their country and the war was not an option for Vietnamese photographers, who documented combat and noncombat operations for years at a time, some returning home only after 1975. Moreover, while Western press photographers were generally engaged in temporally and spatially bounded, event-driven coverage,³⁸ for Vietnamese photojournalists, the war demanded a long-term commitment and everyday immersion in dangerous zones of conflict, where they lived, labored, and sometimes fought alongside their photographic subjects, facing severe hardships and often imminent death. Of the 135 photographers killed in action from eleven nations, 53 percent (seventy-two) were from Vietnam.³⁹

There were also differences when it came to the meaning and intent behind their various photographic practices. Unlike reporters working for the Western press, most of whom were independent of the war effort and thus regarded as “objective,” outside observers, Vietnamese correspondents were considered cultural soldiers of the revolution, whose weapons consisted of pencils, paper, and in the case of photojournalists, cameras.⁴⁰ In interviews and conversations, photographers stressed the importance of photography to serve [*phục vụ*] the country, denounce [*tố cáo*] the war to national and international audiences, and transmit and propagate [*tuyên truyền*] information from the front. But they also emphasized their multivalent roles as cultural producers immersed in the social worlds of people who comprised their subject matter. They endeavored to show the crimes, destruction, and techniques of war, as well as the cooperation, compassion, and social interactions among soldiers and villagers. Vietnamese photojournalists

frequently emphasized the close connections they had to the people with whom they lived and worked, and whom they photographed—relations that continue to be important today. Contrary to Western journalist discourse, they did not talk about objectivity, yet like their Western counterparts, they emphasized their agency and choice in photographing diverse aspects of people's lives and experiences during wartime.

Divergences in conceptualization and implementation of their work influenced the kinds of representations Vietnamese photojournalists ultimately produced.⁴¹ Unlike the graphic images of trauma and death routinely displayed in Western media, images in Vietnam also reflected optimistic and hopeful futures, as well as the everyday, routine present. This broader approach to constituting a visual history of the war diverges from Western practices of “objective journalism” that find journalistic value and truth in visual records of wartime atrocities and casualties. These practices implicitly assume that capturing disaster and devastation on film is the most authentic manifestation of realism—what might be termed capitalist realism—based on the belief that free and open access to violence signifies neutral, balanced, and truthful information. When violence is not given adequate representation or is altogether absent, then it is no longer “reality” that is presumed to comprise the content, but “ideology” or “propaganda”—terms that are often applied in the West to artistic and photographic expressions deemed “socialist realist” (an expression rarely used by my research respondents). What drives and shapes much capitalist realism, particularly in times of war, is an attraction to idiosyncrasies and irony rather than to the mundane and routine. This reinforces the belief that suffering should constitute the primary focus of photographic documentation of warfare; indeed, suffering is often assumed to constitute a universal mode of representation. However, during the war, Vietnamese photojournalism was not predicated on violence and disaster alone, but upon the placement of suffering within a broader spectrum of wartime experiences and subjectivities, and it thus produced a more extensive and informative visual history. These differing practices and logic of visibility resonate with Martin Jay's observation that the “scopic regime of modernity may be best understood as a contested terrain . . . [and] may in fact, be characterized by a differentiation of visual subcultures.”⁴²

In Vietnam, as in many other nations, images of past wars reverberate and continue to circulate in political, social, and educational circuits. Museums, in particular, exhibit Vietnamese photographs of the war that are also reproduced in history textbooks, current mass media, popular culture, and at state commemorative events. Official narratives of the American War are encoded in images that symbolize *national* heroism and sacrifice, rather than *individual* memories of hardship, loss, and trauma. Contrary to the graphically violent photographs that in the United States narrate the history of the war as moral and political failure, images displayed in Vietnamese museums depict the virtues, hopes, labors, and triumphs of the revolution to produce a narrative of progressive and total victory [*toàn thắng*].⁴³

With certain exceptions, there is a conspicuous absence of death and suffering in the collections of war photography displayed in Vietnamese museums.⁴⁴ When harrowing images are used, they are usually few in number or confined to special displays, such as the “War Crimes” display box in the Military History Museum in Hà Nội, where violent photographs of torture committed by the Ngô Đình Diệm regime are juxtaposed in a montage.⁴⁵ More often, museum exhibits provide viewers with ethnographic glimpses into the diverse concerns and activities of villagers and soldiers as they went about their daily lives under the persistent threat of wartime violence. Not infrequently, images show optimistic moments of joy or flickers of hope, often captured in smiles that mark special occasions or victorious celebrations (Figure 1).⁴⁶ Other photographs reveal playful, tender, and leisurely moments, such as music performances in underground tunnels and theatrical events beneath the jungle canopy. Romantic and flirtatious encounters captured on film offer additional insights into the complexity of social relations during the war (Figure 2).⁴⁷

In addition to themes of joy, play, and even love, images in Vietnamese museums regularly show acts of labor and preparation for war, providing a visual testimony to Vietnam’s historical and heroic “spirit of resistance to foreign aggression” in action.⁴⁸ Journalists, for example, often photographed anti-aircraft artillery units poised to fire or female militia toiling in the rice fields, their weapons on their backs. Other images displayed in exhibits, such as youth volunteer forces clearing roads on the Hồ Chí Minh Trail, bring attention to the highly organized and disciplined labor units that assisted in



FIGURE 1: Victory smile by the ancient rampart of Quảng Trị. 1972.
Photograph by Đoàn Công Tính. Courtesy of Đoàn Công Tính.

the defense of the nation. Representations of the diverse contributions of men and women, young and old, as they engaged in agricultural production, covert acts of resistance, or battle campaigns at the front lines offer visual insights into the strategies and workings of a people's war.⁴⁹ Furthermore, these images reinscribe the centrality of discourses of unity and solidarity to



FIGURE 2: On the way to war. Undated. Photograph by Đoàn Công Tính. Courtesy of Đoàn Công Tính.

the war effort, as evident in photographs taken during or immediately after combat that foreground action and victory rather than casualties. Even when injured troops are present, the emphasis is on camaraderie (such as tending to their wounds) rather than on their pain and suffering.⁵⁰

In interviews and conversations, photojournalists rationalized the displacement of violence and death in their images by referring to the multiple experiences and processes of war and its shifting states of affect. In Hồ Chí Minh City, one veteran LNA photojournalist handed me a photograph of a young couple and child relaxing in a hammock in front of a burnt tank, entitled “Happiness.” He explained: “Of course there are joyful moments in war. It is not only about fighting battles; there are also quiet times. My images show the many sides of lives in war, including entertainment.”⁵¹ In Hà Nội, a photographer who had spent ten years on the Hồ Chí Minh Trail compared his images of Vietnamese troops maintaining roads and transporting supplies with photographs of atrocities in the international press: “Western photographers were interested in the fierceness of war and they photographed many dead people. But why do we need to look at such images? It’s not respectful. We know that war is fierce and that people are killed. Do we need to see it over and over again? There is more to photograph in war than only death.”⁵² A staff member at a national museum in Hà Nội also

contrasted Vietnamese and Western styles of representation, when I asked her why, in her opinion, museums tend not to display violent images of war and use terms such as “glorious” to refer to a traumatic history: “That is because we were victorious and we were right. You must understand that Vietnam has a long history of foreign invasion. You don’t have the same history. Who has invaded your country? So we are very proud to have won our wars. And we were right to fight them. That is the difference with the United States. While you have many pictures of death, we celebrate our victory.”⁵³ The multiple subject and moral positions this woman refers to in her quote (defenders and aggressors) map onto distinct modes of representing the past: while the victors rejoice in their triumph through representations of life, the vanquished mourn their defeat through images of death.

In Vietnam there are also political-ideological motivations for the general absence of images of suffering and death, just as there are such motivations in the United States for including them.⁵⁴ Insofar as the state regularly invokes memories of war to commemorate and keep the spirit of the revolution alive, as well as to teach the youth about the past, there is political interest in emphasizing victorious achievements and collective acts of solidarity. Historically, artistic and cultural production thought to embody and represent the spirit of the people was deemed central to the Vietnamese revolution and to the project of constructing a new socialist society, as espoused by Communist Party leaders such as Trường Chinh and Lê Duẩn.⁵⁵ Today such images are also seen as a necessary means to educate and motivate the youth. A war photographer with the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) who in December 1999 held an exhibit at the Military History Museum in Hà Nội (then called the Army Museum) underscored the pedagogical function of his images: “Photographs from the war carry meaning about the past. . . . I want students who come to my exhibit to learn to hate war, but they should also learn about the brave deaths of those who sacrificed their lives. When they see these pictures, they will understand the need to continue the work to build and develop the country.”⁵⁶ Photography is thus imagined to bridge the widening gaps between the past and the future: between generations who experienced war and generations born in its aftermath, who grew up in an era of increasing capitalist consumption and presumably no longer understand the sacrifices of their elders.

Although images of war continue to have currency among certain cultural-political networks and institutions, such as museums, in other spaces prominent social discourses that minimize the trauma of war are gradually being dislodged as cultural producers rethink aesthetic canons and prevailing artistic modes of representing the past. In an overview of contemporary literature in Vietnam, Greg Lockhart outlines literary challenges to revolutionary heroism and the embrace of the individual, “in whose suffering person history was not concentrated and absorbed.”⁵⁷ Popular novels by Dương Thu Hương, Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, and Bảo Ninh have contributed to a genre that explores the bleakness and hardships of war rather than its glories.⁵⁸ For example, Bảo Ninh’s popular novel *The Sorrow of War* defies the prevalent image of heroic and enthusiastic soldiers in combat. Rather, he explores the horrors of the battlefield—the fear, smell, and taste of death that permeated the solemn air for years—thus giving representation to individual suffering in a broader context of enduring social trauma.

Having outlined general trends and practices in Vietnamese war photography and the afterlives of images in a postwar museal context, in the next section I return to the Hồ Chí Minh City showing of Requiem—The Vietnam Collection to examine the diverse historical knowledges produced when photographs from “both sides” of the war, to use the discourse of exhibit organizers, were exhibited alongside one another in a space of transnational commemoration. I begin first with a description of the exhibit.

Knowledge Production and Competing Historical Memories

After opening formalities had come to a close on May 5, 2000, the doors to the exhibit opened. I entered, made my way through the crowds of journalists, officials, tourists, and family members of those killed in action, and came across a computer-generated, digital presentation that flashed each individual image from the collection as laid out in the book. On account of space constraints and certain political concerns, not all photographs were displayed in the exhibit, and the digital presentation provided the viewer with a more complete overview of the entire Requiem project. Beyond this point, the exhibition extended through two large conjoining rooms that included over two hundred photographs of the war displayed alongside portraits of the

photographers, putting human faces on the men and women behind the cameras. Incongruous with the book, the exhibit was arranged into four chronological sections that presented to the viewer the wars with France and the United States from a Western historical perspective. The first section, “A Distant War,” contained Western press photographs from the later years of the First Indochinese War, as it was called in the accompanying English text. The second section, “Escalation,” showed both the earlier years of US troop buildup in Vietnam and photographs from the “other side,” that is, from the not-off-seen perspective of the revolution. “The Quagmire,” the third section, focused largely on US forces in the mid to late 1960s, followed by a concluding section, “Final Days,” that spanned the years 1968–1972 and exhibited images predominantly from Western media sources, with the exception of photographs by VNA correspondent Lương Nghĩa Dũng.⁵⁹ At the end of the exhibit stood a small altar with flowers and an urn for offerings of incense between two large memorial tablets that listed the names of the deceased photojournalists, the design of which was inspired by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, according to US exhibit organizers.

In its juxtaposition of revolutionary and nonrevolutionary images of the war, Requiem became a site of contrasting modes of visual narration and representation. Although there were subtle variations in the aesthetic qualities of the photographs due to financial restraints on the Vietnamese photographers, who had limited supplies of black and white film and who often developed the negatives under hazardous conditions in the field, there were more noticeable differences in the choice of photographic subjects and settings, as well as the viewpoint and camera angles used to represent them. This produced and presented to the viewer differing subjectivities and visual histories of the war that often contradicted one another. For example, photographs from the Western press frequently depicted the brute victimization of Vietnamese suspects. Explicit acts of violence and torture were caught on film, along with tangible moments of pain, anguish, and frustration (Figures 3 and 4).⁶⁰ Fear was an essential element in these images, which were often shot with the camera located above and aimed downward at the subject, conveying a sense of helplessness on the part of the Vietnamese victims while asserting the power of US and Sài Gòn regime forces who are depicted as controlling the situation, and the war.



FIGURE 3: Interrogation of a Việt Cộng suspect by South Vietnamese soldiers. 1965. Photograph by Huỳnh Thanh Mỹ (AP). Courtesy of Indochina Photo Requiem Project.

Photographs from the “other side” contrasted sharply with this dehumanization of Vietnamese bodies in Western media and challenged its dominant representations of subjugated subjectivities. Images taken by Vietnamese photojournalists who had worked with the VNA and LNA typically celebrated resilience and devotion to the nation and the revolution through representations of collective acts of walking, transporting, training, and preparing for war (Figures 5 and 6). The emphasis on people as active,



FIGURE 4: Việt Cộng prisoners. Undated. Photograph by Terry Khoo.
Courtesy of Indochina Photo Requiem Project.

rational, and creative agents rather than passive, defeated victims served to underscore the humanity, ingenuity, and fortitude of the populace. This was further communicated through the photographers' frequent use of the straight-on angle, with the camera positioned at eye level with the subject to convey a sense of equality, urgency, and authority.



FIGURE 5: A woman soldier of the North Vietnamese army carries an ammunition crate along the Hồ Chí Minh Trail. 1966. Photograph by Bùi Đình Túy (VNA). Courtesy of Indochina Photo Requiem Project.

Competing historical knowledges produced in the exhibit reflect divergent subject positions and memories of the war that are deeply rooted in ideological scripts of history still operative in both Vietnamese and US societies. This was also evident in the captions and texts that accompanied the images, in which US ideologies and standard modes of historical interpretation



FIGURE 6: Việt Cộng guerillas and soldiers of the North Vietnamese army use bicycles to transport supplies. 1968. Photograph by Bùi Đình Túy (VNA). Courtesy of Indochina Photo Requiem Project.

tended to predominate. Written from a conventional Western perspective on the war, English-language descriptions of the photographs reproduced dominant historical rhetorics and discourses that diminished the complexities of the war to “two sides” (the us/them, noncommunist/communist dichotomy that was also present in the opening speech) and that at times reflected

prevailing anticommunist biases. For example, the word “enemy” was used to describe “the communists,” and the pejorative term “Việt Cộng” was applied to photojournalists who worked with the LNA, the press arm of the National Liberation Front (NLF).⁶¹ The translations into Vietnamese remained fairly true to their corresponding English text,⁶² thus circulating among Vietnamese viewers common Western understandings of the war that differed significantly from their own historical narratives (in which, for example, US troops would be the enemy, not NLF forces).

The predominance of US ideologies and interpretations resulted in an absence of Vietnamese perspectives and ideological undertones from descriptions of the LNA and VNA photographs. References to the revolution, to optimistic visions of the future, or even to victory—phrases and ideas that embody certain revolutionary subjectivities commonly found in Vietnamese museum exhibits—were lacking in the exhibit. In the case of nonrevolutionary photojournalists from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), Vietnamese captions translated from English were void of pejorative words frequently used in official historical discourse to refer to the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). In a 1965 photograph by Huỳnh Thành Mỹ, the English term “South Vietnamese soldier” is translated as *lính Nam Việt Nam* without the descriptor *ngụy* [puppet] that commonly precedes *lính* in museum texts.

That the exhibit largely represented and reproduced commonly held US beliefs about the war did not escape museum visitors. An English-language entry in the “Impressions” book, located at the end of Requiem for viewers to share their thoughts, complained about the exhibit’s “Western viewpoint” and its use of words such as “enemy,” “invader,” and “assailant” to refer to the revolutionary troops rather than to US forces, thus resurrecting the popular belief in the United States that “the North” invaded “the South.” The critic offered a suggestion: “Why not write from a North Vietnamese view and use words like ‘colonizers?’” A quote by journalist David Halberstam that appears at the entrance to Requiem stressed the crucial role these images have played in constituting “modern memory.” But as the captions reveal, the “modern memory” produced at the exhibit was not entirely constituted by multiple voices and perspectives on the past but was unevenly shaped by and given meaning through US-Western historical frameworks.

Transnational Commemoration and the Politics of Reconciliation

Museum officials were not passive recipients of Western historical knowledge formations, however. A closer look at the choice of site for of the exhibit, as well as negotiations concerning the exclusion of certain photographers and the classification of others, reveals ambivalences underlying processes of reconciliation and transnational commemoration. I first turn to the choice of venue for the exhibit, the War Remnants Museum, a site that offers ethnographic and analytical insights into the shifting parameters of historical memory in the post-Đổi Mới [Renovation] era of normalizing US-Vietnamese relations.

The War Remnants Museum is a unique museal institution on account of its willingness to accommodate and display diverse, often non-official and non-Vietnamese perspectives in its exhibits.⁶³ For example, it is one of the few spaces of official historical memory and history that uses explicitly graphic images to narrate the horrors—not the victories—of war, which contributes to its status as one of the most anticipated stops on the itineraries of foreign tourists in Hồ Chí Minh City. Given the focus of many Western photojournalists on death and suffering in the war, representations of violence in the museum are taken to a large extent from nonrevolutionary media sources. As the codirector explained to me in interviews in 2000 and 2004, museum officials decided to include more images from Western mass media in an effort to “balance” its presentation of the war and appease foreign (especially US) criticism that the museum promotes “propaganda” and lacks “objectivity.”⁶⁴ Certain exhibits also contain war relics (such as medals and uniforms) donated by US veterans who have returned to Vietnam in the postwar years. The expanding representation of GI memories in museums, the Vietnamese mass media, DMZ tourist scripts, and even the trendy Apocalypse Now nightclub points to the various ways in which history is becoming increasingly transnationalized in Vietnam. Even before Requiem—the Vietnam Collection opened in its gallery, the War Remnants Museum had already become an international space of memory and reconciliation that communicated diversely situated, transnational recollections and representations of the past.⁶⁵

The Requiem exhibit was not shown in its entirety in Vietnam but was vetted and edited by Vietnamese officials in Hà Nội to exclude those elements deemed politically sensitive, thus mediating the types of memories and knowledges produced. According to a Kentucky Requiem Project Steering Committee member, despite an agreement to display the entire photo collection, city officials arrived days before the opening in Hà Nội to inspect the recently hung exhibit. Photographs taken in Cambodia were subsequently removed, notwithstanding this committee member's protests.⁶⁶ Officials did, however, allow these images—many of which were taken by Cambodian photographers working for the international press—to be shown in the continuously running digital presentation that surveyed the entire collection as presented in the book. The exclusion of Cambodia from public and national memory in Vietnam is not uncommon.⁶⁷ Along with the border conflict with China in 1979, Cambodia remains a conspicuous historical omission from most museums. Like the French and American wars, the Chinese and Cambodian conflicts are remembered as defensive actions in response to border invasions and foreign aggression. Yet social and political discourse in Vietnam regularly asserts the existence of peace since 1975 and elides any references to the violent years in Cambodia (and the intense border conflict with China) that cost an already war-weary population thousands of additional lives. The Cambodian conflict is highly politically charged in Vietnam, in part, because of international accusations that Vietnam wrongfully invaded and occupied its neighbor, a charge that was repeatedly refuted during fieldwork by Vietnamese citizens and government officials who justified Vietnam's actions as protecting its borders and saving Cambodians from Pol Pot. So when it came to the issue of war and Cambodia, Vietnamese officials firmly delimited the modes and extent of the circulation of Western historical memories and preoccupations.

Yet, not insignificantly, Vietnamese officials proved more willing to negotiate and suspend official practices of memory and knowledge production within the space of the exhibit when it came to the public recognition and commemoration of southern, nonrevolutionary photojournalists. Though there is rarely open public debate on the matter, the issue of remembering

and forgetting the RVN, and the people who participated in its institutions, remains politically, socially, and emotionally charged. After the end of the war, state policies absorbed the area south of the Bến Hải River into a socialist national imaginary of a politically and cultural unified Vietnam. This entailed acts of effacement of nonrevolutionary memories of the RVN, particularly as manifest in its material remains, which included the destruction of public monuments and cemeteries of the former regime, as well as the discouragement of private commemoration of its soldiers.⁶⁸ Since economic and political liberalization, however, the sociopolitical imperative to forget the “losing” side has gradually eased, and new opportunities have emerged for veterans of the ARVN to communicate their knowledge, memory, and experiences of war as guides for international tourists.⁶⁹

That Requiem provided a space to publicly commemorate nonrevolutionary southern Vietnamese war correspondents alongside their revolutionary counterparts is a noteworthy historical occurrence that points to broader processes of reconciliation taking place beyond the scope of Vietnam–US relations. Because of postwar memorial protocol and practices that officially recognize and honor revolutionary martyrs only, joint commemoration has been rare. One exceptional instance where combatants from differing sides of the war have been collectively remembered is at An Lộc, approximately sixty miles north of Hồ Chí Minh City, where a bombing raid in 1973 killed over three thousand ARVN, NLF, and PAVN troops and civilians. According to the ARVN veteran who took me to the site, the magnitude of the bombs made it impossible to distinguish between the bodies, and victims were subsequently buried collectively in a mass grave. A monument that stands on location reads: “Here lie three thousand fellow countrymen [*đồng bào*] from An Lộc who were killed by American planes in the summer, 1973.” In the case of Requiem, however, nonrevolutionary war correspondents were remembered not as *đồng bào* or fellow countrymen, as they were in An Lộc, but as part of an international contingent of “foreign” journalists.

Ambivalences about the commemoration of Vietnamese nonrevolutionary photojournalists and, by extension, acknowledgement of the RVN as their country were evident in several aspects of Requiem. The black, grave-stone-like panels that flanked the altar at the end of exhibit differentiated

not only between countries but also between perceived political convictions. To the right of the altar was the “Vietnam” panel, upon which the names of the seventy-two men and women who died fighting for reunification and liberation were recorded. To the left, the names of photographers who worked for Western press agencies were arranged according to their foreign nationalities. It was here that four Vietnamese journalists were listed under the category “South Vietnam,” which, according to a US organizer, Vietnamese government officials from the outset refused to recognize as a country. While the decision to separate “South Vietnam” from “Vietnam” did not lie with Vietnamese exhibit organizers but had already been formulated by Horst Faas and Tim Page in their book, as well as in the initial Kentucky exhibit,⁷⁰ this political-conceptual split was further sustained by Vietnamese public discourse surrounding the event. Opening speeches by Vietnamese officials in Hồ Chí Minh City avoided any direct reference to correspondents from the Sài Gòn regime, mentioning only foreign photojournalists and “Vietnamese revolutionary martyrs who had sacrificed their lives.” Vietnamese mass media also typically omitted reference to the RVN and the four southern photographers. An editorial on the Hà Nội exhibition in the daily *Nhân Dân* [The People] listed the nations represented in the collection but neglected to include “South Vietnam.”⁷¹ The simultaneous presence and erasure of the Vietnamese nonrevolutionary photographers suggests apprehensions and uncertainties about if, how, to what extent, and in which contexts people from a now-defunct, officially uncommemorated regime might be publicly remembered in Vietnam today. Requiem thus demonstrates the interactive mediation of knowledge and memory engendered in transnational spaces of commemoration and reconciliation and the perseverance of certain historical-ideological constraints for all sides involved in the war.

Conclusion: On Becoming *Đồng Bào*

Requiem drew large crowds of visitors and received positive accolades from the Vietnamese press, as well as from those in attendance with whom I spoke. Although the mood was somber at its opening in Hồ Chí Minh City, as many family members and friends of the deceased were present, there was also an air of excitement that the exhibit marked an important era of change

in Vietnam—a time of reconciliation with the past and of new possibilities in the present and future. In the words of a military official who was also in attendance at the opening ceremony, the ability to see and reflect on “both sides of the war” marked a new chapter of modernization in Vietnamese society, with new knowledge and new ways of thinking about the past.⁷² Yet as argued above, although the exhibit opened a dynamic space for the expression of diverse historical perspectives and memories of the war, *Requiem* was not a politically neutral site of knowledge production and transnational commemoration. The competing visual narratives that surfaced in the exhibit through displays of capitalist and socialist realisms—namely, vanquished versus victorious bodies—point to persistent historical-ideological struggles that permeate reconciliatory processes and play out in the complex and unstable relations between memory and forgetfulness.

Although *Requiem* marked a significant moment in the development of relationships between Vietnam and the United States, social and political reconciliation remains an uneasy and ambivalent process, as evident in the afterlife of the exhibit. Presented as a gift and reconciliatory gesture of “hope, healing, and history” from the people of Kentucky to the people of Vietnam, the collection remained on display in Hồ Chí Minh City for a total of two weeks, after which the photographs were returned to Hà Nội and put into storage, where they remain today (because of space constraints, according to one museum director in Hà Nội). Subsequently, a copy of the collection (from the third set of photographs in London) was made for the War Remnants Museum to keep on permanent display. When I returned to the museum in 2004, several changes had been made to the exhibit and its representations of history. Firstly, retranslations of English captions now presented to domestic museum visitors more standardized, official Vietnamese interpretations of the war. The term “First Indochinese War,” for example, was translated into Vietnamese as *cuộc kháng chiến chống thực dân Pháp*, or “the resistance war against French colonialism.” US ideological undertones evident in the English captions were also tempered in new Vietnamese translations. The term “Việt Cộng,” for example, remained in use in English texts but was translated for the Vietnamese viewer into the more historically and politically correct form, Mặt Trận Dân Tộc Giải Phóng Miền Nam Việt Nam [National Liberation Front of Southern Vietnam]. In correcting

perceived historical inaccuracies, newly translated captions not only challenged Western interpretive frameworks but also diversified subjectivities to provide a more informed perspective on the war than the English texts. In Figure 5, the misleading caption “Soldier of the North Vietnamese Army” was amended in the Vietnamese version to more accurately read *Thanh niên xung phong* [Youth volunteer]. While English captions tended to simplify the war to “Việt Cộng guerillas and soldiers of the North Vietnamese army” (Figure 6) on one side, and US and “South Vietnamese soldiers” on the other, the Vietnamese translations challenged these Western classifications and brought more attention to the complexities and diverse roles of Vietnamese participants in the revolution.

The memorial tablets placed at the end of the exhibit provided another example of the ongoing negotiation of Requiem and the ways in which museum officials first allowed for and then later overturned Western historical frameworks and systems of classification. However, here, official historical perspectives and modes of representing history were not reinforced in the exhibit, but challenged. In the now-permanent display, a socially and symbolically significant shift in the memorialization of the nonrevolutionary Vietnamese photographers had taken place. That the four correspondents are still listed under the title “South Vietnam” demonstrates a decision by museum officials not to permanently erase their presence nor the name of a state that remains officially unrecognized in Vietnam. More notably, their names are no longer classified with their international colleagues but have been re-recorded on a memorial tablet along with the names of photojournalists from “Vietnam” (Figure 7). In stark contrast to the initial 2000 exhibit of Requiem—The Vietnam Collection, where Vietnamese photographers from the Republic of Vietnam were presented as part of the contingent of “foreigners,” in this reconfigured memorial space they are remembered and represented to museum visitors as *đồng bào*, or fellow Vietnamese countrymen.

In this article I have attempted to show how Requiem shifted unsteadily between new memories (images from “other” sides) and old histories (standard historical interpretations); how it became a space of diverse, transnational commemorative practices and symbolic acts of reconciliation, as well as a site for negotiating control over ownership and representation of the



FIGURE 7: Memorial tablet at the permanent exhibit, Requiem—The Vietnam Collection, War Remnants Museum. 2007. Photograph by the author.

past. A notable point of divergence emerges in this case study: in the postnormalization era, while Vietnam has forged ahead—albeit apprehensively—in its diversification of history (e.g., allowing for international perspectives, moving away from a rhetoric of “crimes” in museum names, including RVN correspondents as fellow countrymen), the United States has remained

more stagnant and reliant on its memory and its outdated scripts of history. The retranslation of texts and captions in the permanent exhibit of Requiem provides Vietnamese readers with a more nuanced and complex historical presentation of the war, while English readers consume conventional, dichotomous accounts of history. It is significant that these English texts have not been rewritten to present more standard official Vietnamese perspectives on the past (i.e., with US soldiers as the invaders, or ARVN troops as *ngụy*). That certain debatable phrases, such as “Việt Cộng,” remain in Requiem and continue to find currency in US public spheres today suggests that in this particular context, Vietnamese museum officials have taken broad steps (arguably broader than in the United States) toward accommodating, integrating, and exhibiting conflicting transnational historical memories and interpretations of the war. ■

CHRISTINA SCHWENKEL is Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Riverside. This research was supported by the University of California Pacific Rim Research Program, a Rockefeller Fellowship from the William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences at University of Massachusetts, Boston, and a Mellon Fellowship from Stanford University. The author wishes to thank the Fellows at the William Joiner Center for their helpful suggestions on a presentation of an earlier draft of this article, as well as Richard Lennon, Đoàn Công Tính, Horst Faas, Liisa Malkki, Bill Maurer, Jennifer Ruth Hosek, Julia Zarankin, and two anonymous reviewers for the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*.

ABSTRACT

In April 2000, an exhibit displaying the works of photojournalists killed in action in the Indochinese Wars between 1945 and 1975 opened in Hồ Chí Minh City. Based on the exhibit and interviews with Vietnamese photographers, this article examines photojournalism on the revolutionary side of the war and its relationship to transnational practices of memory that have transpired in recent years since the normalization of US–Vietnam relations. While scholarly research has focused primarily on US cultural productions of the war, this article incorporates Vietnamese representations into the

analysis to compare the distinct and often conflicting visual records of war that the exhibit photographs produced.

KEYWORDS: *war photography, historical memory, transnationalism, representation*

Notes

1. This article is based on three years of ethnographic fieldwork in Vietnam between 1999 and 2006 and a follow-up research trip in summer 2007. In it, I draw from participant observation and conversations at the opening ceremony of Requiem, interviews with Vietnamese war photographers, and fieldwork in museums, primarily in Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City.
2. See, for example, Thaveeporn Vasavakul, "Art and Politics: Nationalism in Vietnamese War Posters," *Asia-Pacific Magazine* 8 (1997): 3–6; Nora A. Taylor, "Framing the National Spirit: Viewing and Reviewing Painting under the Revolution," in *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam*, ed. Hue-Tam Ho Tai (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 109–134; Mark Philip Bradley, "Contests of Memory: Remembering and Forgetting War in the Contemporary Vietnamese Cinema," in Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *The Country of Memory*, 196–226; Nora A. Taylor, *Painters in Hà Nội: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 42–62.
3. For research on music, films, video games, novels, and comic strips about the war, see the following volumes: John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg, eds., *The Vietnam War and American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Linda Dittmar and Gene Michaud, eds., *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film* (London: Rutgers, 2000); and Alf Louvre and Jeffrey Walsh, eds., *Tell Me Lies About Vietnam: Cultural Battles for the Meaning of the War* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1988). On the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, see Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997); on diverse literary expressions of the war, see Katherine Kinney, *Friendly Fire: American Images of the Vietnam War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); on the gendered dynamics of Vietnam War films, see Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).
4. This literature is chiefly concerned with degrees of censorship and the effects of the press and media images on public opinion. See Daniel C. Hallin, *The "Uncensored War": The Media and Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986); William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam:*

- Media and Military at War* (Kansas City: Kansas University Press, 1999); Clarence R. Wyatt, *Paper Soldiers: The American Press and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Andrew Hoskins, *Televising War: From Vietnam to Iraq* (New York: Continuum, 2004). Some scholars have attempted to include other journalist voices, namely those of Western female reporters. See Virginia Elwood-Akers, *Women War Correspondents in the Vietnam War* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1988); Tad Bartimus, *War Torn: Stories of War from the Women Reporters Who Covered Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 2002).
5. This spark in interest had much to do with Horst Faas and Tim Page's book *Requiem: By the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina*, from which the photography exhibit draws. A few years later the National Geographic film *Vietnam's Unseen War: Pictures From the Other Side* was released in conjunction with the book *Another Vietnam: Pictures of the War from the Other Side*. See Horst Faas and Tim Page, eds., *Requiem: By the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina* (New York: Random House, 1997); *Vietnam's Unseen War: Pictures from the Other Side*, VHS, directed by Jeff Myrow, et al. (United States: National Geographic, distributed by Warner Home Video, 2002); Tim Page, *Another Vietnam: Pictures of the War from the Other Side* (Washington DC: National Geographic Press, 2002).
 6. See Đoàn Công Tính, *Khoảnh khắc: ảnh phóng sự về chiến tranh Việt Nam* [Moments: Photographs of the Vietnam War] (HCMC: Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 2004); Mai Nam, *Một thời hào hùng* [Once A Glorious Time] (HCMC: Thanh Niên, 2001); Hoàng Kim Đáng, *Đường Hồ Chí Minh trong chiến tranh* [The Hồ Chí Minh Trail in Wartime] (Hà Nội: Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2007); and Dương Thanh Phong with Khu Di Tích Lịch Sử Địa Đạo Củ Chi [Củ Chi Tunnels Historical Remains], *The Documentary Album of Củ Chi 1960–1975, Album no. 2*, (HCMC: Mũi Cà Mau, 2002). For a compilation of photographers that includes Văn Bảo, Võ An Khanh, Nguyễn Đính Ưu, and Vũ Ba, among others, see *Báo Cựu Chiến Binh Việt Nam* [Newspaper of the Veterans of Vietnam], *Ký ức thời oanh liệt: ảnh phóng sự về chiến tranh Việt Nam* [Memories of a Glorious Time: Photographic Material on the Vietnam War] (HCMC: Tổng Hợp Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh, 2003).
 7. See Christina Schwenkel, "Recombinant History: Transnational Practices of Memory and Knowledge Production in Contemporary Vietnam," *Cultural Anthropology* 21, no. 1 (2006): 3–30; Victor Alneng, "'What the fuck is a Vietnam?': Touristic Phantasms and the Popcolonization of (the) Vietnam (War)," *Critique of Anthropology* 22, no. 4 (2002): 495–523; Laurel B. Kennedy and Mary Rose Williams, "The Past without the Pain: The Manufacture of Nostalgia in Vietnam's Tourism Industry," in Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *The Country of*

- Memory*, 135–163; Ian Walters, “Where the Action Was: Tourism and War Memorabilia from Vietnam,” in *Converging Interests: Traders, Travelers, and Tourists in Southeast Asia*, eds. Jill Forshee, Christina Fink, and Sandra Cate (Berkeley, CA: Center for Southeast Asia Studies, 1999), 265–278.
8. For example, over twenty memoirs of the war were published in 2004 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Điện Biên Phủ and the then-approaching thirtieth anniversary of the reunification of Vietnam. Việt Hà, “Hồi ký – hồi ức về chiến tranh đang ‘ăn khách’” [Memoirs and Recollections of the War Are Best Sellers], *Sài Gòn Giải Phóng*, December 26, 2004. This trend continued into 2005 with immensely popular texts such as Đặng Thùy Trâm, *Nhật ký Đặng Thùy Trâm* [The Diary of Đặng Thùy Trâm] (Hà Nội: Hội Nhà Văn, 2005); and Nguyễn Văn Thạc, *Mãi mãi tuổi hai mươi – nhật ký thời chiến tranh* [Forever Twenty: A War Diary] (Hà Nội: Thanh Niên, 2005).
 9. On US media memories of the Vietnam War, see Hoskins, *Televising War*, 13–44.
 10. Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).
 11. See Patrick Hagopian, “Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Memory,” in *Locating Memory: Photographic Acts*, eds. Annette Kuhn and Kirsten Emiko McAllister (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 201–222.
 12. See Veena Das, *Life and Worlds: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 7.
 13. See Heonik Kwon, *After the Massacre: Commemoration and Consolation in Ha My and My Lai* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006); Schwenkel, “Recombinant History”; Christoph Giebel, *Imagined Ancestries of Vietnamese Communism: Ton Duc Thang and the Politics of History and Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004); Shaun Kinglsey Malarney, *Culture, Ritual and Revolution in Vietnam* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002); Hue-Tam Ho Tai, ed., *The Country of Memory: Remaking the Past in Late Socialist Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001); Hue-Tam Ho Tai, “Monumental Ambiguity: The State Commemoration of Hồ Chí Minh,” in *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*, eds., K.W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1995), 272–288. These works are part of a larger body of literature on socialism in other national contexts that challenges the image of docile communist bodies by emphasizing citizens' active roles in reconfiguring and reinterpreting state memorial and historical projects. See also Rubie S. Watson, ed., *Memory, History and Opposition under State Socialism* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1994); Grant Evans, “Immobile Memories: Statues,” in *Thailand and Laos in Cultural Crisis and*

- Social Memory: Modernity and Identity in Thailand and Laos*, eds. Charles Keyes and Shigeharu Tanabe (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 154–184; Bruce Grant, “New Moscow Monuments, or, States of Innocence,” *American Ethnologist* 28, no. 2 (2001): 332–362; Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 215–255.
14. Hue-Tam Ho Tai, “Introduction: Situating Memory,” in Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *The Country of Memory*, 1–17, quote on 3.
 15. For example, CNN sent its former Vietnam War correspondent, Richard Blystone, back to Vietnam to cover the anniversary and subsequent changes in Vietnamese society since 1975. Reporting live from Hồ Chí Minh City, Blystone commented, “This is most likely the last trip to Vietnam for most of us who covered the war. It’s nice to see this country at peace” — the implication being that war makes for better news than peace. CNN broadcast, April 30, 2000.
 16. The anthropologist Ulf Hannerz has called this focus on war “[being] on the trouble trail,” arguing that foreign correspondents “mostly show up at times of wars, upheavals, and disasters, and are already long gone when things begin to return to normal.” Ulf Hannerz, “Other Transnationals: Perspectives Gained from Studying Sideways,” *Paideuma* 44 (1998): 109–123, quote on 116. For an ethnography of everyday reporting practices and the global production of news, see Ulf Hannerz, *Foreign News: Exploring the World of Foreign Correspondents* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
 17. Nora M. Alter, “Excessive Pre/Requisites: Vietnam through the East German Lens,” *Cultural Critique* 35, no. 1 (1997): 39–79, quote on 45. Alter goes on to cite Trinh T. Minh-ha: “For general western spectatorship, Vietnam does not exist outside the war. And she no longer exists since the war has ended” (45). Also see Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 100.
 18. Rowe and Berg, *The Vietnam War and American Culture*, 2–3. See also Michelle Janette, “Look Again: *Three Seasons* Refocuses American Sights of Vietnam,” *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1, nos. 1–2 (2006): 253.
 19. During the war, Horst Faas worked for the Associated Press, while Tim Page worked for United Press International and other Western news agencies.
 20. There were originally three sets of Requiem photographs in circulation, each of which constituted a separate exhibit. The first set, titled Requiem: By the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina, began touring US cities in 1997 under the auspices of Gannett Publishing. The second set was displayed in a small exhibition in Japan before being sent to Kentucky, where the images were mounted and prepared for viewing in 1999. A third set later

toured select cities in Europe, and today it remains in a private collection in London. Telephone interview with a member of the Kentucky Requiem Project Steering Committee, May 25, 2007. The exhibit under discussion here, Requiem—The Vietnam Collection, is based on the same set of images, but it should not be confused or conflated with the other exhibitions, which were assembled differently, displayed in dissimilar contexts, and motivated by differing interests.

21. Six weeks earlier, at the opening ceremony in Hà Nội, Richard Lennon had offered the collection “on behalf of the people of Kentucky . . . as a permanent gift to the people of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam . . . with a sincere sense of hope, of healing and of history. May this gift begin a new and strong relationship between the peoples of Kentucky and Vietnam.”
22. Christina Schwenkel, “Iconographies of War: The Transnational Politics of Memory and Visuality in Contemporary Vietnam” (PhD dissertation, University of California, Irvine, 2004), 161–166. The phrase “transnational memory making” is borrowed from Geoffrey M. White, “Remembering Guadalcanal: National Identity and Transnational Memory Making,” *Public Culture* 7, no. 3 (1995): 529–555.
23. Despite its limitations, I maintain this system of classification as a means to analyze the kinds of historical knowledge produced at the exhibit. Thus, Vietnamese correspondents, as they are referred to in the exhibit, do not include nonrevolutionary photographers from the Republic of Vietnam.
24. Jorge Lewinski, *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day* (London: W.H. Allen, 1978). On war photography in the United States from the Spanish-American War to the Vietnam War, see Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (New York: Basic Books, 1989). Yet, for all the images of combat that comprise historical memory, there is also the issue of *absent* images, since wars have never been photographed entirely free of media restrictions. See Marita Sturken, “Absent Images of Memory: Remembering and Reenacting the Japanese Internment,” *Positions* 5, no. 3 (1997): 687–708. On the ways the perceived impacts of television images of the Vietnam War shaped representation of the 1991 Gulf War, see Hoskins, *Televising War*, 28–34.
25. However, Hallin cites numerous studies, including his own, that “reject the idea that the living-room war meant graphic portrayals of violence on a daily basis, or that television was consistently negative toward US policy or led public opinion in turning against the war.” Hallin, *The “Uncensored War,”* xi.
26. On the iconic status and powerful afterlife of this image in the US public sphere, see Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago:

- University of Chicago Press, 2007), 171–207; Hagopian, “Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Memory,” 201–222; Denise Chong, *The Girl in the Picture: The Story of Kim Phuc, the Photograph, and the Vietnam War* (New York: Viking, 2000).
27. Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 200. Iconic images of the Vietnam War have taken on renewed currency in the recent context of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. For an analysis of the political cartoon “Abu Ghraib Nam,” in which the now iconic hooded figure from Abu Ghraib lurks behind Kim Phúc as she runs down the street, see Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 202. For an example in Vietnam of an article that links the Mỹ Lai massacre to Abu Ghraib visually and historically, see Phạm Hồng Phước, “Những liên hệ và đối chiếu đau lòng” [Connections and Heart Wrenching Comparisons], *Công An Thành Phố Hồ Chí Minh* [Hồ Chí Minh City Police], May 11, 2004.
 28. Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, “The Appeal of Experience; The Dismay of Images: Cultural Appropriations of Suffering in Our Times,” in *Social Suffering*, eds. Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 1–23.
 29. Scholars who have argued this position include Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget*; Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977; New York: Anchor Books, 1990). For a reconsideration of her earlier arguments presented in *On Photography*, see Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2003).
 30. Hoskins, *Televising War*, 11.
 31. See, for example, Hagopian, “Vietnam War Photography as a Locus of Memory,” 216–219; Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 188–203.
 32. Mark Pedelty, *War Stories: The Culture of Foreign Correspondents* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 2.
 33. Chong, *The Girl in the Picture*, 68–69. Ultimately, Nick Út agreed to “do the humane thing” and take Kim Phúc and another severely burned woman to the nearest hospital. On the journey, the narrative shifts between concern for the victims and his rolls of film (later referred to as his “good pictures of napalm”), thus demonstrating Nick Út’s wavering position between moral responsibility and professional commitment (*Ibid.*, 69–71). For a point of comparison, see a discussion of the “moral failures” of photographer Kevin Carter and his subsequent suicide only months after his Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph of the starving child in Sudan stalked by a vulture was published in the *New York Times* (Kleinman and Kleinman, “The Appeal of Experience,” 3–7).

34. Pedelty, *War Stories*, 136–138; Radhika Parameswaran, “Military Metaphors, Masculine Modes, and Critical Commentary: Deconstructing Journalists’ Inner Tales of September 11,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 30, no. 1 (2006): 42–64.
35. Initially, the US military attempted to ban female correspondents, deemed a distraction to troops, from remaining overnight on the battlefield. Joyce Hoffman, “On Their Own: Female Correspondents in Vietnam,” *Quest* 2, no. 1 (1998), <http://www.odu.edu/ao/instdv/quest/femalecorrespondents.html> (accessed September 7, 2007). On the difficulties and discrimination faced by female journalists covering the war in Vietnam, see Bartimus, *War Torn*; Elwood-Akers, *Women War Correspondents in the Vietnam War*; Natalia J. Haller, “Female War Correspondents in Vietnam: A Turning Point for Women in American Journalism” (MA thesis, Humboldt State University, 2006). Edith Lederer, who, in 1972, was the first woman to receive a full-time assignment to the AP in Sài Gòn, reported a common sentiment at that time that “women could not stand up to the demands of the world’s backwaters and battle zones.” Edith Lederer, “My First War,” in *War Torn: Stories of War from the Women Reporters Who Covered Vietnam*, ed. Tad Bartimus (New York: Random House, 2002), 155–185, quote on 157.
36. Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).
37. Quoted from Tad Bartimus, “The Photographers,” in *Requiem: By the Photographers Who Died in Vietnam and Indochina*, eds. Horst Faas and Tim Page (New York: Random House, 1997): 156–157, quote on 156.
38. As Hannerz notes, in their attachment to “breaking news,” foreign journalists are “less apt to build their reporting around . . . not-so-quick, but cumulative, directional change.” Ulf Hannerz, “Reporting from Jerusalem,” *Cultural Anthropology* 13, no. 4 (1998): 548–574, quote on 571.
39. This number does not include four nonrevolutionary correspondents from the Republic of Vietnam who were killed in battle.
40. Hồ Chí Minh, *Về báo chí* [On Journalism] (Hà Nội: Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 2004), 243; Nguyễn Tiến Mão, *Cơ sở lý luận ảnh báo chí* [Theoretical Foundation of Photojournalism] (Hà Nội: Thông Tấn, 2006), 76. On the history of journalism in Hà Nội between 1954 and 1993, see Hội Nhà Báo Thành Phố Hà Nội [Association of Hà Nội Journalists], *Báo chí Hà Nội – một chặng đường lịch sử 1954–1993* [Hà Nội Journalism: A Stage in History 1954–1993] (Hà Nội: Chính Trị Quốc Gia, 1995). On the use of photography in the war for liberation, especially by the LNA, see Hội Nghệ Sĩ Nhiếp ảnh Việt Nam [Association of Vietnamese Photographic Artists], *Lịch sử nhiếp ảnh Việt Nam* [History of Vietnamese Photography] (Hà Nội: Văn Hóa – Thông Tin, 1993), 60–114.

41. Radhika Parameswaran, "Military Metaphors, Masculine Modes, and Critical Commentary," 49.
42. Martin Jay, "The Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 3–28, quote on 4. This visual subculture extends to other socialist cultural production on the war as well. See, for example, "*Hanoi, Martes 13*" by the Cuban director Santiago Alvarez, a film that shows Hà Nội residents, especially schoolchildren, as they attempted to go about their daily life activities on December 13, 1966, until US bombers attacked. *Hanoi, Martes 13* [Hà Nội, Tuesday the 13th], VHS, directed by Santiago Alvarez (Cuba: ICAIC, 1967). Thomas Billhardt, from the former East Germany, has also produced a well-known collection of intimate and contemplative images of wartime Hà Nội. Billhardt returned to Vietnam in 1999 to make a film about the postwar lives of his photographic subjects. He set up a spontaneous, unofficial, outdoor exhibit of his photographs at the north end of Hoàn Kiếm Lake in Hà Nội (at which I was in attendance) and waited for people in his photographs, or individuals who knew them, to show up (which some did). See *Eislimonade für Hong Li* [Ice Lemonade for Hong Li], DVD, directed by Dietmar Ratsch and Arek Gielnik (Germany: Filmakademie BW, Filmpool Ludwigsburg, distributed by Progress Film-Verleih, 2000). On Vietnamese reception of Billhardt's work, see Trần Đường, *Nhiếp ảnh: mấy vấn đề tiếp cận và tiếp nhận* [Photography: Problems of Approach and Reception] (Hà Nội: Thông Tấn, 2004), 426–434. For an analysis of the collection of films produced during and after the war in northern Vietnam by the prominent East German filmmakers Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann, see Alter, "Excessive Pre/Requisites," 48–72.
43. In the Museum of Military History in Hà Nội, *Toàn Thắng* is the name of the final exhibition room, in which a replica of tank 843, which crashed through the gates of the former Presidential Palace on April 30, 1975, is on display under Hồ Chí Minh's famous dictum "Không có gì quý hơn độc lập tự do" [There's nothing more precious than independence and freedom].
44. Notable exceptions include the War Remnants Museum (the site of the Requiem exhibit in Hồ Chí Minh City) and the Mỹ Lai Museum in Quảng Ngãi Province, both of which rely heavily on graphic photographs produced by Western news agencies to document abuse, murder, and mutilation.
45. For example, the recently renovated and merged Air Defense–Air Force Museum in Hà Nội includes in its exhibits two photographs of wartime casualties, both of which document victims, including children, of US bombing raids.
46. On the discourse of optimistic futures during the war, see Susan Sontag's essay *Trip to Hanoi*, in which she quotes her interpreter as saying, "There are many

- difficulties until the war ends . . . but we remain optimistic.” She then surmises, “For the Vietnamese, their victory is a ‘necessary fact.’” Susan Sontag, *Trip to Hanoi* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1968), 85. Likewise, the photographer of Figures 1 and 2, a battlefield reporter who traveled with the People’s Army of Vietnam, explained to me in an interview that his images of war captured widespread sentiments of hope and optimism: “Despite the hardships of war, the bombings and the deaths, we always kept our eye on victory. Though many people died, we remained hopeful, happy, and focused on the future.” Interview with photojournalist, December 9, 1999, Hà Nội. Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet has similarly observed that newspaper images during the war depicted “village life [as] serene and filled with people happy and smiling even while they planted paddy, hoed weeds, and spread manure.” Benedict J. Tria Kerkvliet, *The Power of Everyday Politics: How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 108.
47. As one research respondent indicated to me, “You know, war is not only violent and fierce, but also romantic.” Interview with museum visitor, December 7, 1999, Hà Nội.
48. Patricia M. Pelley, *Postcolonial Vietnam: New Histories of the National Past* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 140–147. On the cultivation of a national history around themes of resistance to foreign aggression, see also Patricia Pelley, “The History of Resistance and the Resistance to History in Post-Colonial Constructions of the Past,” in *Essays into Vietnamese Pasts*. eds. K.W. Taylor and John K. Whitmore (Ithaca, NY: Southeast Asia Program Publications, 1995), 232–245.
49. See Võ Nguyên Giáp, *People’s War, People’s Army: The Viet Cong Insurrection Manual for Underdeveloped Countries* (New York: Bantam Books, 1962).
50. This is not to argue that Vietnamese journalists did not in any way photograph civilian and combatant casualties. Văn Bảo’s graphic and sorrowful image of a family killed during a US B-52 attack on Hải Phòng in 1972 is but one example. Some of such images were displayed in the Exhibition Houses for US Crimes [Nhà Trưng Bày Tội Ác Mỹ] during and immediately after the war with the intent of documenting atrocities and fueling the revolution, but they are not commonly included in museums today, save for certain exceptions as previously mentioned. Schwenkel, “Iconographies of War,” 261–263. The words of one photojournalist echoed a sentiment often expressed by museum directors and employees in interviews and conversation: “There’s no reason to show such images today.” Interview with photojournalist, December 17, 2004, Hà Nội. This attests to the ways in which the geopolitics of the present (i.e., renewed diplomatic ties with the United States) affect visual representations of the past in contemporary spaces of historical memory. *Ibid.*, 266–268.

51. Interview with photojournalist, December 24, 2004, Hồ Chí Minh City.
52. Interview with photojournalist, August 29, 2007, Hà Nội.
53. Interview with museum employee, January 11, 2000, Hà Nội.
54. Although the representational practices of Vietnamese photojournalists contrast with wartime photographs produced in the Western press, they are in no way unique to Vietnam. The current trend in the West to deglamorize war and expose the magnitudes of its suffering and devastation is a more recent media phenomenon whose shifting parameters depend upon dominant political persuasions (such as the current ban on photographing coffins of US troops killed in Iraq). World War I representations of the gallant soldier on horseback romanticized the idea of the heroic combatant going off to fight a just war and defend an honorable cause. In the United States, John Wayne came to embody the celebrated male hero who further romanticized warfare by associating it with bravery, love, and hypermasculinity—images that initially shaped the subjectivities of many US soldiers who served in Vietnam. Kinney, *Friendly Fire*, 17; John Hellmann, *American Myth and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 93.
55. Trường Chinh, *Tuyển tập văn học, hai tập* [Selected Writings, Volumes 1 and 2] (Hà Nội: Hội Văn Học, 1994); Lê Duẩn, *Xây dựng nền văn hoá mới con người mới xã hội chủ nghĩa* [On Building a New Socialist Culture and a New Socialist Man] (Hà Nội: Văn Hoá, 1977).
56. Interview with photojournalist, December 9, 1999, Hà Nội.
57. Greg Lockhart, “Introduction: Nguyen Huy Thiep and the Faces of Vietnamese Literature,” in *The General Retires and Other Stories*, by Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, trans. Greg Lockhart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1–38, quote on 7.
58. Dương Thu Hương, *Novel Without a Name*, trans. Phan Huy Đường and Nina McPherson (New York: Penguin, 1996); Nguyễn Huy Thiệp, *The General Retires and Other Stories*, trans. Greg Lockhart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Bảo Ninh, *The Sorrow of War* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1993).
59. In the book, images from 1968–1972 are presented in chapter 4, entitled “Last Flight.” “Final Days” is the title of chapter 5, which contains photographs of Cambodia that were excluded from the exhibit.
60. Captions for Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 are taken from the exhibit, which are direct quotations from the book.
61. During the war, members of the NLF were commonly and pejoratively referred to as “Việt Cộng” or “VC” by US forces and much of the international mass media. The expression “Việt Cộng”—generally held to be a truncated form of Việt Nam Cộng Sản [Vietnamese communist]—has its roots in the post-1954 Ngô Đình Diệm period, when it was used as an ideological weapon

to identify opponents of the southern regime as communists or as communist sympathizers and to justify their incarceration and, at times, their execution. The fact that “Việt Cộng” and “VC” remain in use today by many people in the United States and beyond exemplifies the long-term effects of wartime misrepresentation of the NLF as a communist institution. On the diverse non-communist and communist factions, motives, and power struggles within the NLF, see Truong Nhu Tang with David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, *A Vietcong Memoir* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).

62. According to an exhibit organizer in Kentucky, the English captions had been adapted from the book and then translated into Vietnamese in the United States. All descriptions, both in Vietnamese and English, were numbered and sent with the mounted photographs to Hà Nội. Vietnamese officials never commented on the captions, I was told. They were more concerned with the inclusion of certain photographs they deemed sensitive. Telephone interview, May 25, 2007.
63. Originally called the Exhibition House for US and Puppet Crimes [Nhà Trưng Bày Tội Ác Mỹ Ngụy], the museum has evolved through a long, metamorphic trajectory that mirrors shifts in political and economic policies. In the late 1970s, during the Cambodian and Chinese conflicts, the exhibition house dropped the descriptors, “US” and “Puppet,” changed its name to the “Exhibition House for Crimes of War and Aggression” [Nhà Trưng Bày Tội Ác Chiến Tranh Xâm Lược], and added displays on Cambodian and Chinese atrocities. These exhibits were gradually dismantled, and in 1991, when relations with China were normalized, the section on Chinese hostilities against Vietnam was closed (this also occurred in the Military History Museum in Hà Nội). In 1995, the year diplomatic ties between Vietnam and the United States were re-established, the words “crimes” and “aggression” were abandoned as the exhibition house was upgraded to museum status and the name changed once again to its current “War Remnants Museum.” The War Remnants Museum thus demonstrates how museal institutions and the knowledges they produce are entangled in webs of global economic interdependencies and geopolitical processes.
64. Interviews with codirector of the War Remnants Museum, April 8, 2000, and July 13, 2004, Hồ Chí Minh City. Museum officials thus attempted to use to their advantage tourist beliefs in the objectivity and historical veracity of capitalist realist representations of violence (even as these tourists deny the historical legitimacy of revolutionary perspectives). Ironically, this strategy sometimes backfired: the display of Nick Út’s photograph of Phạm Thị Kim Phúc was condemned by certain US visitors to the museum as propagandistic and exploitative. It is no longer on display.

65. This is not to argue that all historical actors are given representation in the museum, nor are all voices equally or uniformly represented. In one room, US forces may be “enemies,” while in the next room they are “friends.” Veterans of the ARVN do not find their experiences represented in the museum in an official capacity, although those who serve as tour guides may informally share their memories on site.
66. This act did not violate the signed agreement between the Exhibitor (VNA and the Association of Vietnamese Photographic Artists), the Lender (Indochina Photo Requiem Project, Ltd.), and the Donor (Kentucky Requiem Project Steering Committee). The second item of the agreement, signed November 12, 1999, states: “The Exhibitor agrees to present the complete photo collection which consists of approximately 300 (three hundred) pictures and text material. In case the Exhibitor wishes not to present some of the pictures, it has to inform the Lender.”
67. In Hà Nội, the Air Force Museum had a small display on the “Southwest Campaign” that contained a few photographs of devastated Vietnamese villages at the hands of “Pol Pot pirates” and weapons used to protect the border. This was the only exhibit on Cambodia that I found in the capital city. However, this display is no longer present in the newly renovated and renamed Air Defense–Air Force Museum, which opened in July 2007.
68. See Shaun Kinglsey Malarney, “‘The Fatherland remembers your sacrifice’: Commemorating War Dead in North Vietnam,” in Hue-Tam Ho Tai, *The Country of Memory*, 46–76, see page 67.
69. Schwenkel, “Recombinant History,” 18–20.
70. In email communication, an exhibit organizer from the Kentucky Historical Society explained the practicalities of the design of the memorial tablets: “The original intent of the layout was to alphabetize the order of the countries. South Vietnam was separate from Vietnam due to the fact that we were dealing with persons from the South and the North, with the number from the North being exceptionally large To use the official names of the two, Republic of Vietnam and Democratic Republic of Vietnam, would have impeded the flow of the design and I felt like it would be confusing to the uninformed. . . . I did not use the term North Vietnam out of respect for the current political situation at that time. As for the placement of South Vietnam with the foreign countries . . . [i]t helped to illustrate the political delineation of the conflict, and the overall design just seemed to balance better.” Email message to author, August 9, 2007.
71. Editorial, *Nhân Dân* [The People], March 12, 2000.
72. Conversation with Vietnamese military officer, May 5, 2000, Hồ Chí Minh City.