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DISPUTING THE WRECKAGE: IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE AT THE VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

HARRY W. HAINES

Even before its construction, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial ("The Wall") achieved public and critical attention. Magazines, newspapers and television reports gave wide currency to Maya Lin's winning design, producing a mass mediated aura for the Memorial before it took shape on the Washington Mall. These early reports, and the Memorial itself, helped initiate what political elites had long avoided: an ideological struggle over the meaning of the Vietnam War, the symbolic political function of Vietnam veterans, and most significantly, the rationale for American deaths. This ideological struggle continues to unfold at The Wall, a ritual site where pilgrims enact complex relationships with casualties and history. The Wall now functions as a potent and politically volatile sign of the citizen's relationship to others and to the state¹ and does not, as Griswold² argues, "separate war and politics". On the contrary, the Memorial provides a locus of ideological struggle, revealing the political nature of the current reintegrative phase of Vietnam's "social drama"³ as various ideological blocs struggle to assign meaning to the war, Vietnam veterans and the dead.

BREAKING THE SILENCE

The Wall helped initiate a reintegrative — or healing — process in the aftermath of what Fox Butterfield⁴ describes as "a trance of collective amnesia," during which the war was officially "forgotten" by political elites and Vietnam veterans were effectively removed from public discourse. The "trance" (an example of the productive capacity of hegemony) served the interests of political power by avoiding a potentially damaging analysis of the structural relationships and assumptions⁵ which produced the war as "an ersatz conflict, invented for protecting artificially conceived vital interests"⁶. Additionally, the "trance" provided time for the regrouping of political interests in the immediate aftermath of an ideological crisis. Historian Marilyn Young⁷ observed:

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The fundamental institutions which gave rise to the Vietnam war have hardly changed; what has changed is the *credibility* of the Imperialist ideology which justified that war. From the viewpoint of the State, that is the wound that must be healed.

Serving as the anomaly in the reassertion of structural credibility, the Vietnam veteran was simply silenced; a profoundly tragic process which David Rabe⁸ predicted in his politically controversial play, *Sticks and Bones*. The absence of a strong political consensus (shattered by the war's ideological crisis) positioned the veteran as a potentially volatile sign of a failed strategy, what Gibson⁹ calls "mechanistic anticommunism". The process of hegemony silenced the veteran by providing no position from which to speak about the war. This process is revealed in mass mediated representations of the veteran as either a victim or psychotic, two variations on the theme of repression¹⁰, and is strengthened by its indictment of the antiwar movement as the source of the veteran's discontent.

The Wall, in effect, broke the silence of the immediate postwar years, returned the veteran to discourse and initiated the ideological struggle which now characterizes the reintegrative phase. Televised rituals introduced the Memorial and also focused on how veterans and others used it to enact their sense of loss. These widely disseminated rituals forced political elites to verbally recognize Vietnam veterans for the first time since the end of the war and spawned several "homecoming parades" which Michael Clark¹¹ has called examples of "historical surrealism". The Wall produced Vietnam veterans and the war dead as objects of ideological struggle, reflected in subsequent mass media representations, including *Rambo*, *Platoon*, and various television programs such as *Magnum, P.I.*; *The A-Team*; *Tour of Duty*; *China Beach*; and *Vietnam War Story*. Significantly, the veteran's return to discourse occurs during a revisionist period, and the process of hegemony — no longer able to silence veterans — adjusts to the new conditions by developing therapeutic and disciplinary strategies. Nowhere are these strategies more evident than at The Wall.

DISPUTING THE WRECKAGE

Sensing the potential cooptation of their lived social experience, the antiwar Vietnam veterans argued against any attempt to represent the dead in the form of public architecture. Marine combat veteran W.D. Ehrhart's¹² poem, "The Invasion of Grenada," expresses an oppositional view:

I didn't want a monument
not even one as sober as that
vast black wall of broken lives.
I didn't want a postage stamp.
I didn't want a road beside the Delaware
River with a sign proclaiming:
"Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway."

What I wanted was a simple recognition
of the limits of our power as a nation
to inflict our will on others.
What I wanted was an understanding
that the world is neither black-and-white
nor ours.

What I wanted
was an end to monuments.

Ehrhart implies "an understanding" which recognizes Vietnam's social reality, the very thing which US war managers attempted to obliterate by the deployment of technology and rapid modernization¹³ and which hegemony attempts to further marginalize by means of historical revisionism¹⁴. Thomas Roberts¹⁵, an activist in the soldiers' antiwar movement, suggested alterations to what he expected would be the "typical" war memorial: "Defy the typical motif by situating the slab sunken, sucking air for meaning." Roberts envisioned an archlight beaming across the Mall, illuminating a monumental crater, "the ashes of 50,000 John Does ... scattered to the bottom."

Ehrhart and Roberts responded bitterly to what they saw as the predictable cooptation of the war dead. They understood intuitively what Walter Benjamin¹⁶ concluded in the 1930s: "Even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins." And they were right to fear the cooptation of the Vietnam experience by political interests determined to use veterans and casualties to justify future interventions. But the ideological struggle centered at The Wall developed in unexpected and unpredictable ways, and this struggle is worthy of examination.

Since its construction in 1982, The Wall has quickly developed as a popular attraction in a city accurately described as a "tourist district". Elaborate sightseeing rituals are evident, and the Memorial demonstrates what MacCannell¹⁷ identifies as several phases in a process of "sight sacralization," in which attributes formerly reserved for holy places are ascribed to tourist attractions in the modern world. The ideological struggle to assign meaning to the Vietnam War emerges at the Memorial in what MacCannell identifies as the "naming" phase¹⁸.

Naming activities include public speeches, other administrative

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messages and various news accounts functioning to define the Memorial and to thereby define the war and veterans. For example, President Jimmy Carter signed the Memorial's construction authorization with these words:

A long and painful process has brought us to this moment today. Our nation, as you all know, was divided by this war. For too long we tried to put that division behind us by forgetting the Vietnam war and, in the process, we ignored those who bravely answered their Nation's call, adding to their pain the additional burden of our Nation's own inner conflict¹⁹.

Clearly, the Memorial is to be a sign signifying both a sense of loss for the dead and a sense of reincorporation of the survivors. It is the sign of community refound, as if the Nation is coming to its senses following an incomprehensible lapse in memory (the trance of collective amnesia). Carter locates the Vietnam veteran as a carrier of a special "burden," a unique repository of America's war-related contradictions. He names the Memorial as a sign of national expiation, a sign through which Vietnam veterans are purged of an unidentified "inner conflict". Hegemony's therapeutic strategy unfolds even before the groundbreaking.

The Memorial, veterans, and by implication, the war itself are further psychologized in the naming phase. The idea for a Vietnam War memorial originated as the response of one veteran to a mediated version of the war, the feature film *The Deerhunter*. Former infantryman Jan C. Scruggs, tormented by flashbacks after seeing the film, formed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund in April, 1979²⁰. He was joined by several volunteers, many of them wives and mothers of soldiers killed in the war. By January 1980, Congress authorized the memorial, and all one hundred Senators co-sponsored the bill. The Fund announced a juried competition for memorial designs in October 1980. Texas millionaire H. Ross Perot provided seed money for the competition. Submitted designs were required to list the names of all the dead and missing Americans and to demonstrate sensitivity for the site, close to the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial²¹. The selection criteria required that the design be apolitical in the sense of expressing no specific position on the correctness of the war.

From among 1,421 entries (the largest design competition in the United States or Europe), a jury of eight prominent architects and sculptors selected the design of 22-year-old Maya Lin, an undergraduate student of architecture at Yale University. The Lin design was selected in May 1981, and approved by the National Capitol Planning Commission, the Fine Arts Commission and the Department of the Interior. In October 1981, a bitter opposition emerged; a significant

development in the naming phase. Wounded Vietnam veteran Tom Carhart, now a civilian lawyer at the Pentagon, called the design "a black gash of shame and sorrow," and asked the Fine Arts Commission:

Are we to honor our dead and our sacrifices to America with a black hole?... Can America truly mean that we should feel honored by a black pit? In a city filled with white monuments, this is our reward for faithful service²².

Although Carhart's own proposed design (a representational figure of an army officer holding the body of a dead infantryman to the sky) had been rejected, his opposition to Lin's design was apparently based on criteria of stylistic "normalcy". For him, Lin's design was symptomatic of the disorder. Where the Commission saw "dignity", "nobility", and "serenity", Carhart saw "shame and sorrow", the veterans' burden all along. He was joined by author James Webb, a decorated Marine Combat veteran who later served as Secretary of the Navy, and Assistant Secretary of Defense. Webb called Lin's design a "wailing wall"²³. Perot also opposed the selected design and opposition grew when the *Chicago Tribune* called it "a monumental insult to veterans". Those agreeing with Carhart and Webb wanted the Memorial to be white and above ground, similar to other monuments in Washington, DC.

Congressional opposition gathered, and Interior Secretary James Watt withdrew his support in January 1981, six weeks before groundbreaking. Scruggs then drew upon support from national veterans' groups and influential military leaders to fight the opposition. Secretary Watt, named by Congress to oversee the design process, ordered Scruggs to seek a compromise. Throughout January and February 1981, conflicting sides argued and finally agreed to a compromise design which included a flagpole and a representational statue by Frederick Hart. Despite the acrimony of the early naming phase, the actual ceremony marking off the Memorial was characterized by these selected statements:

Amy Chaplain Max D. Sullivan: "May this place be a holy place of healing."

National Commander of the American Legion Jack W. Flint: "The suffering and the loneliness (the veterans) bore when they returned home...are finally at an end. The frustration and confusion of the American people, long willing but unable to express their gratitude and appreciation to a generation of unselfish patriots, is finally at an end."

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Executive Director of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Cooper T. Holt: "(the Memorial will help) create an accord out of our bitterest military experience since the Civil War."

Virginia Governor Charles S. Robb (President Johnson's son-in-law and Marine combat officer in Vietnam): "I wasn't able to answer 'why' (when writing to the families of men killed under his command), *and this memorial doesn't attempt to say why but it does say we cared and we remembered.*"²⁴

Jan C. Scruggs: "The American people were divided by the war... but one point that all Americans can agree upon is that Vietnam veterans deserve recognition and appreciation for their sacrifices. Let this memorial begin the healing process and forever stand as a symbol of national unity."²⁵

The Memorial is named a therapeutic place of healing and accord, an expression of gratitude and national unity, a unique physical location where consensus emerges, where suffering, loneliness, frustration and confusion are purged. The trance of collective amnesia is broken in 1981, as America "remembers". But it is a specific kind of remembering, identified by Governor Robb. The memory is therapeutic and not historic. The most important question Robb pondered while writing to the survivors of dead Marines remains unanswered even as consensus is attained.

Since its introduction in 1982, the Memorial has quickly developed as the focal point of the national memory of Vietnam. This memory is produced as the product of ideological struggle and takes material form in the broad range of activities which now occur at the site. The Memorial's ambiguous stance generates a shifting symbolic ground, a fluctuating, constantly renegotiated field in which visitors enact the meaning of the Vietnam War. Based on his ethnographic observations at the Memorial site, Ehrenhaus²⁶ categorizes the visitors according to three types of behavior and how these behaviors embody particular types of social meaning.

Mourners come "in secular pilgrimage", often to leave "artifacts of commemoration" at the site. The mourners include Vietnam veterans who treat the Memorial as "sacred ground". Meaning arises from the personal truths of remembrance in the liminal encounter of the living and the dead²⁷.

Searchers have no personal relationships with the names on The Wall: they "search for ways of participating as broadly as possible in discovering the Memorial's meanings", and "they use mourners and their artifacts as focusing lenses". For searchers, meaning arises in part from memory, but mainly from the chance and momentary encounters

with mourners and artifacts of the Memorial's social world.

Volunteers were initially mourners or searchers, and have made a commitment to the Memorial as a place of "genuine experience". They serve as caretakers who help visitors and who watch over veterans overwhelmed by their encounters²⁸.

As Ehrenhaus' observations suggest, these three groups constitute an ever changing social and political context for the Memorial. Their ritualized behaviors help keep the Memorial's meaning open and resistant to closure and ideological containment. Their presence maintains an organic quality in the ideological struggle over the war's meaning. Foss²⁹ attempts to explain the extraordinary popular success of the Memorial by focusing on the design's ideological ambiguity, a product of the design criteria. Because "no one meaning emerges from the memorial", each visitor must bring his or her own meaning to bear upon the names in granite, and each must see his or her own reflection — the self — among the dead, and this helps explain the development of the Memorial as a site of pilgrimage. The Wall's ideological ambiguity acknowledges what Scarry³⁰ calls "the referential instability of the hurt body". In her analysis of "the structure of war", Scarry focuses attention on the phrases: "to kill for his country" and "to die for his country", the universal ideological declarations in warfare. The killing and dying constitute "a deconstruction of the state as it ordinarily manifests itself in the body"³¹, requiring "the appended assertion (either verbalized or materialized as in the uniform), 'for my country'". The Wall avoids the "appended assertion" and assigns no heroic motivation whatever to the injured bodies recounted in the names, but otherwise significant by their absence. Only individual names accumulate as war's wreckage, prompting the *National Review* to complain: "The mode of listing the names makes them individual deaths, not deaths in a cause; they might have been traffic accidents."

But the list of names makes it possible for the Memorial to simultaneously comfort the visitor while evoking an interpretation of profound loss. As a sign of the injured body, the Memorial's names and how pilgrims acknowledge them work against the political cooptation Ehrhart and Roberts feared. The injured body, represented by the individual name, develops as the sign of the deconstructed nation, and this sign is enacted in the ritual of touching The Wall. By touching an individual name, the pilgrim acknowledges the injured soldier's absence from social relationships, locating Vietnam "as an experiential and historical fact in the lives of... families"³² and in other social networks extending across time. Pilgrims further acknowledge the injured body by leaving artifacts proclaiming the individual characteristics of lost soldiers, placing the loss within specific social settings.

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Each name locates the meaning of war in the lived, individual experience of a specific casualty, whose absence from social discourse extends the meaning of war to the community. Each name is a sign of an injured body, a life lost at a specific moment in time. Because the names are listed chronologically, and not alphabetically, the reader must search for a specific name according to the specific moment of loss. Occasionally, an alphabetical arrangement breaks the precise pattern of representation, and "we know that here were the men of a single platoon, wiped out together in a single engagement"³³. Instead of serving as a sign of the structure of war, the injured body signifies what Gilligan³⁴ calls the "structure of interconnection".

Foss³⁵ reports that "supporter and protester of the war alike" often respond to The Wall with the term "eloquent". But this eloquence, this ambiguity, opens the Memorial to ideological struggle and makes it potentially susceptible to the hegemonic process now evident at the site (as well as in other cultural forms, including mass media representations of the war). More than any recent example of public architecture, the Memorial provides a concrete instance — a perfect model in material form — of Stuart Hall's³⁶ observation that "no guarantees" exist in ideological struggle. The design's ambiguity makes it peculiarly open-ended as an object of struggle, suggested by its widespread use by a variety of political factions as a symbol of the war's meaning. By claiming The Wall, conflicting groups claim the memory — the "lessons" — of Vietnam for their various agendas. The meaning of the Memorial remains open. The hegemonic process has not yet fully coopted it, but not for want of trying.

Therapy and Discipline

Hegemony attempts to coopt the Memorial by therapeutic means, demonstrated by Veterans Day ceremonies in 1984 and 1988 which administratively normalized the Vietnam veteran. At the 1984 ceremony, President Ronald Reagan officially accepted the Memorial on behalf of the nation. The acceptance came a few days after the unveiling of Frederick Hart's representational addition to The Wall and climaxed a week-long series of events called *Salute 2*, a sequel to the 1982 *National Salute to Vietnam Veterans* in which 150,000 veterans marched through Washington for the televised opening of The Wall. In newspaper coverage, *Salute 2* organizers stressed the theme "American Veterans — One and All", a conscious appeal to integrate younger Vietnam veterans with older veterans of earlier, more successful wars. This model of transgenerational positioning would take subsequent form in film and television representations of the Vietnam veteran within the conventions of World War 2 combat films, thereby decontextualizing the Vietnam War by removing it — and Vietnam

veterans — from specific historical circumstances. One newswire reporter explained that *Salute 2*

was billed as part of a "healing process" for those veterans, many of whom returned from Southeast Asia to be spat at by anti-war protesters as "baby killers" and by veterans of America's victorious wars as "losers"³⁷.

Administrative power offers a therapeutic position for Vietnam veterans, "hailing"³⁸ them as World War 2 heroes and demonstrating hegemony's ability to smooth over ideological contradictions, to make them seem natural and right, or what Hall³⁹ calls "'good sense,' which — leaving science to one side — is usually quite enough for ideology". In *Salute 2*, acknowledgement of the Memorial is intended as reintegration of the Vietnam veteran, as well as identification of the veteran's "burden", left unspecified by President Carter four years earlier. The theme of healing and reintegration is stressed throughout the newspaper reports of the ceremonies and emerges as the central administrative message in President Reagan's 11 November 1984 speech of formal acceptance, quoted in detail by New York Times reporter Ben A. Franklin⁴⁰:

"This memorial is a symbol of both past and current sacrifice," Mr. Reagan said.... "The war in Vietnam threatened to tear our society apart, and the political and philosophical disagreements that separated each side continue, to some extent," he said. "It's been said that these memorials reflect a hunger for healing.

'Loyalty and Valor' Praised

"I do not know if perfect healing ever occurs... but I know that in one sense when a bone is broken and it is knit together well, it will in the end be stronger than as if it had not been broken. I hope that before my days as Commander and Chief are ended, the process will be completed."

"Let me say this to Vietnam veterans gathered here today," Mr. Reagan said, "When you returned home, you brought solace to the loved ones of those who suffered the scars.... But there has been a rethinking there, too. Now we can say to you, and say as a nation, thank you for your courage."

"There has been much rethinking by those who did not serve, and those who did.... There has been much rethinking by those who had strong opinions on the war, and by those who did not know which view was right. There's been rethinking on all sides, and this is good. And it's time we moved on, in unity

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and with resolve, with the resolve to always stand for freedom, as those who fought did, and to always try to protect and preserve the peace."

Hegemony produces a new position for the veteran, who is "subjected, used, transformed and improved"⁴¹ by therapeutic and disciplinary means. The Memorial symbolizes "both past and current sacrifices", linking the Vietnam War to a continuing vigilance necessary to "protect and preserve the peace". The cost is great but it is nevertheless a normal condition in which Vietnam is a specific example of a general type. Vietnam veterans are "those who fought", those who stood "for freedom", as Americans have always stood for freedom — *and still do*. The Vietnam War is normalized in terms consistent with American political ideology, the deaths are made rational, and the veterans are whole once again, stronger for their expiated burden.

The message identifies the veterans' burden as "little solace," the lack of compassion and acceptance given to combat veterans by their countrymen once the war was lost. The lack of solace is further specified as a characteristic of Americans "unable to distinguish between" a generalized abhorrence for war and "the stainless patriotism" of Vietnam veterans. The contradictions of the veterans' firsthand experience⁴², the war's "counterfeit universe"⁴³ are explained as "philosophical disagreements" in the process of resolution. Where disagreement existed, a consensus is manufactured which attempts to integrate the Vietnam veteran with other veterans and to normalize the Vietnam War in terms of other wars. For the veteran, the price of reintegration is the revision of memory to coincide with hegemony's newly produced consensus. Many veterans are willing to accept these terms, a measure of their postwar isolation. Hegemony structures "the field of other possible actions"⁴⁴ open to some veterans, who bring their interpretation of Vietnam in line with prevailing interpretations, enabling a therapeutic function of the Memorial. In this way, Vietnam veterans may become what Hall⁴⁵ calls "fully paid-up members of the consensus club", the sign of the reintegrated society.

VETERANS DAY 1988

The 1988 Veterans Day ceremonies at The Wall, televised by the C-SPAN cable network, served several political interests. It provided an opportunity for the American Legion National Commander, HF "Sparky" Gierke, to briefly mention the results of a study showing that "almost two-thirds of those who experienced heavy combat" in Vietnam "reported delayed psychological and other health effects"⁴⁶. Gierke told the crowd of about 10,000 persons⁴⁷: "The problems faced by

these veterans are real. They are not self-inflicted. They are veterans who need help but are not getting it from a country they served."

Psychologically distressed veterans remain an ideological anomaly in the hegemonic process whereby Vietnam veterans are hailed as World War 2 heroes. Such veterans signify ideological crisis, what Lewis⁴⁸ identifies as a disconfirmation of meaning. They continue to occupy a social role which inherently questions the credibility of the policies which hegemony now reasserts. Their distress is politically volatile. Significantly, Gierke insists that the problems are "not self-inflicted", implying a basis for the problems within the *structure* of the war itself, but his comments are ignored by other speakers who share a common objective: the production of Vietnam veterans and the war dead as signs of ideological certainty — as signs of a reconstituted consensus. For example, Virginia Senator-Elect Charles Robb reminded the crowd that the 1984 ceremonies had consecrated the Memorial as "a holy place", and he linked the reconciliation of veterans to the broader concept of foreign policy⁴⁹:

Perhaps in no other area is the need so acute as in the area of foreign policy. We have to proceed on a bipartisan basis for a course of energetic engagement, a policy that vigorously asserts America's ideals and defends her interests abroad, a policy that establishes our role as an inspiration to oppressed peoples everywhere.... And it must be a policy that neither renounces nor relies exclusively on the use of force, a policy tempered but not paralyzed by the lessons of Vietnam.

Robb's final comments implied what "the lessons" might include. He called for the nation to "stand for support of democracy and human rights and vigorous opposition to tyranny," an agenda which "the memory of our fallen brothers and sisters" in Vietnam is intended to inspire. Hegemony again obscures the contradictions of American involvement in Vietnam by decontextualizing the structural relationships between the US war managers and the Saigon government — structural relationships in which corruption and tyranny were the *norms*⁵⁰. The Vietnam War dead emerge as signs of political consensus for a renewed policy of containment, the very policy which failed in Vietnam.

Other speakers developed the theme of reconciliation and closure. The ceremonies occurred one month after Election Day, and John Wheeler, Chairman of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, called for political unity. The ceremony also marked the approaching end of the Reagan administration. Behind the speakers podium a large banner read: "Vietnam Veterans Memorial Thank You Mr. President!" Wheeler explained that Reagan had intervened in behalf of the Memorial's construction when Secretary of the Interior Watt had

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moved to block it, and Wheeler added⁵¹:

President Reagan brought the Vietnam veterans home. He brought us home in the sense of according us respect and opening the door so that we can continue to serve our country.

In 1981, the separation between Vietnam veterans and our country was a very deep wound. There had not been a condition like that anywhere in our country's past. Now, eight years later, there's been a remarkable reconciliation.

Here, Wheeler comments directly on the therapeutic nature of the ideological process which began unfolding at the Memorial and within other cultural forms once the Vietnam veteran was returned to discourse. Hegemony, in the form of administrative action, signals a new acceptance and, for some, opportunities. For this, Wheeler thanked the President, who called Vietnam veterans "gentle heroes" and "champions of a noble cause"⁵²:

I am not speaking provocatively here. Unlike the other wars of this century, of course, there were deep divisions about the wisdom and rightness of the Vietnam War. Both sides spoke with honesty and fervor, and what more can we ask in our democracy? After more than a decade of desperate boat people, after the killing fields of Cambodia, after all that has happened in that unhappy part of the world, *who can doubt that the cause for which our men fought was just?* (Italics added)

It was, after all, however imperfectly pursued, the cause of freedom. And they showed uncommon courage in its service. Perhaps at this late date we can all agree that we've learned one lesson: that young Americans must never again be sent to fight and die unless we are prepared to let them win. (Italics added)

The therapeutic strategy takes form as administrative expiation. As in 1984, veterans are reminded in 1988 that they fought for freedom in Vietnam, but were not permitted to win the war. Here the strategy relies directly upon what Kimball⁵³ identifies as "the stab-in-the-back legend" which holds that the Vietnam War was "lost" by weak politicians, civilian strategists, antiwar activists, news reporters and others and is "founded on arch-conservative and militaristic assumptions and values". The strategy is especially powerful in its ability to ascribe an anti-veteran position to its critics, and this parallels stab-in-the-back

arguments which equate "criticism of containment militarism with disloyalty"⁵⁴.

The ceremonies generated a photo opportunity which further deployed the strategy throughout various media, including the front pages of the 12 November 1988 issues of the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Washington Post*. The photo provides an instance of ideological condensation in which the productive power of hegemony takes material form. The photo shows President and Mrs. Reagan in the role of mourners at The Wall, identified in the following captions:

The New York Times: President Reagan and his wife, Nancy, at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Mr. Reagan said that despite divisions over the war, "who can doubt that the cause for which our men fought was just?"

Los Angeles Times: Nancy Reagan reaches out to the wall of the Vietnam War (sic) Memorial as she and the President pay a Veterans Day visit.

The Washington Post: As the President looks on, First Lady Nancy Reagan reaches out to touch wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The photo opportunity extends the process of ideological cooptation into the rituals which produce the war's meaning. Hegemony claims The Wall for the specific needs of a reasserted consensus implied in the President's speech. The ideological struggle focused on The Wall includes attempts to reassert a consensus which serves power in three ways: it closes debate on the structure of American policy in Vietnam; it provides a therapeutic and politically useful reintegration for veterans; and it facilitates future military interventions based on an improved and more fully rationalized Vietnam model.

¹ Ehrenhaus, P. "Silence and Symbolic Expression," *Communication Monographs* 55 (1988): 41-57.

² Griswold, Charles. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography", *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1986): 714.

³ Turner, V. *From Ritual to Theater: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications) 1982.

⁴ Butterfield, Fox. "The New Vietnam Scholarship," *The New York Times Magazine* (1983 February 13): 26.

⁵ Baritz, Loren. *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us Into*

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Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did (New York: William Morrow) 1985; Kolko, Gabriel. *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon) 1985.

⁶ Kimball, J. "The Stab-in-the-Back Legend and the Vietnam War," *Armed Forces and Society* 14 (1988): 452.

⁷ Young, Marilyn. "Revisionists Revised: The Case of Vietnam," *Newsletter of the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations* (1979 Summer): 2.

⁸ Rabe, David. *Sticks and Bones* (New York: Samuel French) 1972.

⁹ Gibson, William. *The Perfect War: The War We Couldn't Lose and How We Did* (New York: Vintage) 1988.

¹⁰ Berg, Rick. "Losing Vietnam: Covering the War in an Age of Technology," *Cultural Criticism* 3 (1986): 92-125.

¹¹ Clark, Michael. "Remembering Vietnam," *Cultural Criticism* 3 (1986): 46-78.

¹² Ehrhart, William D. "The Invasion of Grenada," in W.D. Ehrhart, ed., *Carrying the Darkness: Soldier-Poets of the Vietnam War* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press) forthcoming. Reprinted with permission of the author.

¹³ Gibson: 188.

¹⁴ E.g., Lewy, Guenter. *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1978.

¹⁵ Personal interview with the author.

¹⁶ Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Hannah Arendt, ed.; H. Zohn, trans. (New York: Schocken Books) 1969.

¹⁷ MacCannell, D. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books) 1976: 44-45.

¹⁸ Portions of this essay originally appeared in an article titled, "'What Kind of War?': An Analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial" in the March 1986 issue of the journal *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, and are published here with the permission of the Speech Communication Association.

¹⁹ Carter, Jimmy. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter 1980-81*, Volume 2 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office) 1982: 1268.

²⁰ McCombs, P. "Reconciliation: Ground Broken for Shrine to Vietnam War Veterans," *The Washington Post* (1982 March 27): 14.

²¹ Hess, E. "A Tale of Two Memorials," *Art in America* 74 (1983 April): 122.

²² Carhart cited in McCombs: 14.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Italics added.

²⁵ McCombs: 14.

²⁶ Ehrenhaus, P. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: An Invitation to

Argument," *Journal of the American Forensics Association* (in press).

²⁷ I have discussed this category as a "cult of remembrance" in "What Kind of War?". Carlson, A. and J. Hocking discuss the artifacts left at the Memorial in terms of redemptive rituals in "Strategies of Redemption at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52 (1988): 203-215.

²⁸ I have discussed the social functions of this category as "priestly duties" in "What Kind of War?".

²⁹ Foss, S. "Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," *Communication Quarterly* 34 (1986): 326-340.

³⁰ Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press) 1985: 121.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 122

³² Berg: 125.

³³ Hubbard, W. "A Meaning for Monuments," *The Public Interest* 74 (1984): 20.

³⁴ Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) 1982.

³⁵ Foss: *loc. cit.*

³⁶ Hall, Stuart. "Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 2 (1985): 91-114.

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⁵¹C-SPAN.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Kimball: *loc. cit.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*: 443.