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INTRODUCTION

National Amnesia,
Transnational Memory,
and the Legacies of the
Second Indochina War

What's in a Name?

The Vietnam War. The American War. The Vietnamese-American War. The American War in Viet Nam. The Second Indochina War. All wars have multiple names, but the Second Indochina War seems to have more than most.¹ Embedded in the words and phrases used to describe the long war, fought by multiple entities on multiple fronts from at least 1961 to at least 1975, are assumptions and biases about who was to blame, who did the fighting, and how this war fits into larger historical narratives. As with most names, however, these obscure much more than they reveal.

The Vietnam War—the name of choice in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and much of the West—indicates how this war fits into the larger thrust of American history, describing the choice of the United States and its allies to fight a war in Viet Nam, as opposed to Laos, Korea, or Iraq. This name carries with it connotations of a global war against communism, a deeply divided home front, and the oft-repeated but rarely answered question, “Why Vietnam?” Conversely, the American War, as many Vietnamese call it, places the war against the United States during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in a longer line of wars fought for Vietnamese independence against China, Japan, and France. It situates the United States as the latest in a long line of aggressors and would-be colonizers

that attempted unsuccessfully to impose their will on the Vietnamese people.

Other names, such as the Vietnamese-American War or the American War in Viet Nam, carry similar meanings and similar questions, but what these names all have in common is their reliance on nation-states—the United States and Viet Nam—as the primary reference points for who fought in this war and why. They rely on the binary logic of subject and object, aggressor and victim, victor and vanquished, that serves as the foundation for many historical narratives, particularly America-centric narratives about the Cold War and, more recently, the “War on Terror,” in which, according to proponents of these myths, the world can be divided easily into allies and enemies, good and evil. But names that rely on the unified subjects supposedly signified by “America” and “Vietnam” obscure not only the local but the international and transnational nature of this particular war that is critical to understanding its history and its legacies.

“The Second Indochina War,” while far from perfect, provides the discursive space for scholars and citizens to write and speak back against history, to fill in the transnational gaps in the narratives that have defined this conflict, and to provide a more complete understanding of a lengthy and complex struggle that will long serve as a defining moment in the histories of many nations and, indeed, the world. This is a war that directly involved, among others, the United States, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, the Republic of Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos, Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, China, the Soviet Union, Canada, and Thailand and indirectly involved numerous others. This is a war in which national borders were drawn, redrawn, contested, violated, transgressed, ignored, defended, occupied, defoliated, and bombed. The effects of that war have been similarly transnational, most immediately for Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos, but also for its millions of veterans around the world and for the diasporic populations from Southeast Asia who have spread out globally since the early 1970s. These transnational subjects—their bodies, their experiences, and their histories—belie any narratives that rely on stable national subjects and stable national borders. If we think about transnationalism as social fields, identities, and relationships constructed across geographic, cultural, and political borders, it becomes clear that transnational narratives and interventions are required to address the history and legacies of the Second Indochina War.²

Nations and Narrations

Acts of war, Jill Lepore reminds us, inevitably generate acts of narration, and the Second Indochina War has generated as much narration as any war in history. “Waging, writing, and remembering a war,” Lepore writes, “all shape its legacy, all draw boundaries.”³ Year after year more histories, memoirs, novels, films, war stories, ghost stories, and other acts of narration intervene in the field of cultural memory, fighting and refighting the “Vietnam War,” the “American War,” and the battle over the contested memory and meaning of this long and bloody conflict, however it is labeled, drawing, tracing, reinscribing, and reinforcing geographic and temporal boundaries. For the thousands of scholarly works published on the war, the overwhelming majority have remained locked in frameworks that place the nation-state at the center of analysis and focus on the years of “official conflict” between the United States, its clients in southern Viet Nam, and the revolutionary forces throughout the Vietnamese nation. The result has been the persistence of a framework that has rendered largely invisible the Vietnamese in general and the divisions within Vietnamese society in particular.⁴

Over the past decade or so, these boundaries have become much more fluid and porous. Since the end of the Cold War, scholars from around the world have sought to internationalize the history of the Indochinese conflict.⁵ More recently, a new generation of Western scholars has explored the early period of U.S. involvement in Viet Nam, often reclaiming a greater sense of Vietnamese agency in the process.⁶ Other studies have decentered not only the United States but the nation-state in general by focusing more on the ways in which the Vietnamese revolution shaped and was shaped by everyday life in southern Viet Nam.⁷ A recent special edition of the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* took this trend even further, focusing on the admittedly ironic topic of the “Vietnamization of Vietnam War Studies.”⁸

Only very recently, however, have we seen the emergence of work from either U.S.-centric or Vietnamese-centric perspectives that takes as its focal point the period after 1975. This growing body of literature addresses the political, environmental, and cultural legacies of the war, postwar relations between the United States and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, tourism and global economic transformations, and the mythologies the war engendered, particularly in the United States.⁹ As these studies have

shown, the period after 1975 provides a rich source of topics and developments for study.

When the United States finally left in 1975, two years after the withdrawal of its combat troops, Viet Nam faced the challenge of reconstructing its devastated nation and society while at the same time fighting wars against China and the Khmer Rouge. Washington, having failed to fully achieve its political and military objectives in Southeast Asia, turned to economic and cultural warfare against its Vietnamese foes. At the grassroots in both nations, the suffering persisted. For Vietnamese, the physical legacies of Agent Orange, landmines, and unexploded ordnance did not dissipate with the American withdrawal; rather, these menaces claimed tens of thousands of new victims. American veterans, too, dealt with the physical and psychological hardships the war unleashed, dying from allegedly war-induced diseases and experiencing the sometimes painful challenges of “coming home.” Thousands of Vietnamese chose to flee their homeland for new homes in the United States, France, Australia, and elsewhere in the West. Others, too young to guide their own destinies, unwittingly entered the ranks of the adopted. Scholars, writers, and artists in both countries set before themselves the tasks of introspection—or denial—and renewal. Veterans from a variety of nations sought to initiate transnational healing. At the broader level of the economy, the United States remained belligerent, seeking to punish Viet Nam for its stubborn resistance to the American intervention. Viet Nam, having fought for a socialist revolution, succumbed to the forces of international capitalism that, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, rendered the hegemony of “the market” inevitable.

With few exceptions, most of the recent works on the post-1975 period remain limited in part by the state-based frameworks they adopt. We anticipate that the next generation of scholarship on the legacies of the Second Indochina War will come from interdisciplinary scholars employing transnational perspectives. Thus, the essays gathered here, representing scholars working in a variety of fields, from a variety of backgrounds, and at various stages of their careers, seek collectively to transcend and transgress the chronological and national boundaries that have characterized much of the earlier scholarship. While the United States and Viet Nam remain the focal point of this collection, the legacies of the Second Indochina War for those nations and for a variety of actors within and beyond

their borders are situated by the scholars here in global and transnational frameworks through a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary lenses.

The Essays

When the Second Indochina War abruptly ended in 1975, its Vietnamese victors were left with little time for reflection. They faced a nation to rebuild and reunite, a socialist revolution to consolidate, and renewed threats to regional and national security on their borders. Of immediate significance, the Communist Party was forced to reconcile memories of the short-lived Republic of Viet Nam (“South Vietnam”) with post-1975 policies and historical narratives that legitimized the Vietnamese revolution. How the revolutionaries arrived at this particular moment is a story with which most Americans remain unfamiliar. In “Legacies Foretold: Excavating the Roots of Postwar Viet Nam,” Ngo Vinh Long provides a historical foundation for our understandings of postwar Vietnamese society, examining the still largely unexplored topic of South Vietnamese politics between 1970 and 1975. His essay seeks to move beyond existing treatments of the challenges facing a reunified Viet Nam, most of which focus on simplistic formulations that pit the demands of a centralized communist state against the challenges of markets, privatization, and democracy. Instead, Long locates many of the challenges facing the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam in the political repression of the Thieu regime before and after the Paris Accords of 1973. By eliminating any possibilities of political pluralism in the south, Long argues, the Thieu regime made postwar reconciliation, political accommodation, social integration, and development that much more difficult. By recovering the role played by the regime in destroying the Provisional Revolutionary Government in particular, Long adds another dimension to recent work by Lien-Hang T. Nguyen and Sophie Quinn-Judge on this long-neglected topic and period.¹⁰

If the Vietnamese revolutionaries found themselves constructing and reinforcing a narrative of the past that would serve the postwar state, they have hardly been alone in this process of memory management. The memory of the Second Indochina War has taken on crucial national and transnational characteristics, affecting not only individual survivors but also the subsequent actions of the conflict’s various belligerents. Demon-

strating the importance of this memory to the exercise of postwar American power, Walter L. Hixson's essay "Viet Nam and 'Vietnam' in American History and Memory" centers on the cultural recasting in the United States of the history of the Second Indochina War and its implications for U.S. foreign policy. He argues that through a variety of means—including military revisionism, discourses targeting antiwar protesters and the "liberal media," and Hollywood's veteran-centered Vietnam War films—American culture recast the war in ways that allowed for the nation to "heal" and rebuild popular support for foreign intervention.¹¹ This process of healing, he demonstrates, marginalized narratives in which "Vietnam" could be viewed as a disastrous intervention illuminating—and thus inspiring a transformation of—the nation's militant national identity.

As Hixson shows, over the last quarter of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, the shadow of the Vietnam experience hung over U.S. foreign policy, as well as over attitudes on the home front. This haunting aura of the Indochina war took on a name of its own, the "Vietnam syndrome," describing the cynical, frustrated, and pessimistic sense with which America approached the world. This troubled Americans deeply, as they feared that their vaunted sense of mission had given way to feelings of limitation and hesitancy. The success of every subsequent foreign intervention was hailed not only for its own sake but also as a demonstration that the nation had finally put "Vietnam" behind it. The basis for these feelings can be traced to those first moments that followed the end of the war. Indeed, some of the syndrome's elements began to coalesce even before American troops had come home for good. "Back in another America, people used to dance in the streets when a President declared the end of a war," *Newsweek* asserted in May 1975. Instead, almost immediately, there emerged a random, impressionistic, and frequently heartfelt array of observations about a nation trying to cope with a loss it once could not have envisioned but that now stared it squarely in the face. Those responses contained the first stirrings of what would often seem like the national mood for the next three decades. In "The Main-spring in This Country Has Been Broken?: America's Battered Sense of Self and the Emergence of the Vietnam Syndrome," Alexander Bloom focuses on these developments in the period that immediately followed the end of the war. Scholars have long noted how rapidly Americans went from a Second World War frame of mind into a Cold War mindset. Bloom shows that with equal or even greater rapidity, they went from the era of the Viet-

nam War to that of the Vietnam syndrome. His essay adds important new dimensions to the recent explosion of work on the cultural, intellectual, and political history of the 1970s, using the legacies of the Vietnam War as a way to connect to the decades that follow.¹²

Even more severely than the United States, Viet Nam emerged from the Second Indochina War a deeply divided society. The many challenges of reconciliation and integration in postwar Viet Nam were not easily overcome. Indeed, as Heonik Kwon shows in “Cold War in a Vietnamese Community,” those challenges are still very much on display throughout the country, continuing to divide regions, villages, and, in some cases, families. Leaving aside the more familiar tales of economic reforms and the growing demands of global economic integration, Kwon demonstrates how the memory of the American war remains a powerful force in the everyday life of many Vietnamese. By combining the social history of the American war at the village level with the global, postcolonial history of the Cold War, Kwon highlights the challenges facing individual families and scholars of the war alike. Illuminating what he calls the “creative everyday practices” of Vietnamese families in overcoming the painful legacies of war, Kwon thus also offers a way forward for a more interdisciplinary, international history of the Second Indochina War.

Consistent with Kwon’s desire to divert our gaze from states to citizens, including the fractious memories with which they often must contend, Christina Schwenkel, in “The Ambivalence of Reconciliation in Contemporary Vietnamese Memoryscapes,” builds on extant studies that address American veterans’ return to Viet Nam as postwar tourists seeking reconciliation with their onetime adversaries by exploring the often marginalized and largely absent role of veterans of the Army of the Republic of Viet Nam (that is, the “South Vietnamese Army”) in transnational healing projects. Drawing on interviews and informal discussions with former Vietnamese soldiers, her analysis moves from the reconciliation of “former enemies” to irreconciliation among allies and the resulting unexpected solidarities that emerge. Schwenkel shows how two memoryscapes in particular—the Ho Chi Minh City Martyrs’ Cemetery in Bien Hoa and the former “demilitarized zone” (DMZ) in central Viet Nam—“transgress the rigid boundaries that are often drawn between communities of memory, meaning, and practice.” Her discussion of the DMZ in particular brings to light what she calls intersecting “topographies of memory,” richly describing how the former Khe Sanh/Ta Con military base has been

transformed into “a space of ritual care for the souls of the war dead, irrespective of side, ideology, or nationality.” In light of these findings, she argues that the complex and internal tensions that have emerged under the postwar social and economic conditions of Viet Nam demand more complicated and multilayered understandings of the meanings and practices of healing and reconciliation that take place in the aftermath of war.

Continuing the exploration of postwar legacies beyond the realm of state actors and official discourses, Viet Thanh Nguyen draws on texts from American, South Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese combatants, veterans, and novelists to show how writers from Asia and North America have drawn on the literary tools of compassion and cosmopolitanism to again fight the war, though this time in memory, with the purpose of illuminating a path to peace. His essay, “Remembering War, Dreaming Peace: On Cosmopolitanism, Compassion, and Literature,” sweepingly covers these works to provide a more global focus than is found in most previous American studies of the literature of the Vietnam War. Placing these works in a transnational framework, Nguyen describes how a variety of narratives framed by compassion, cosmopolitanism, and empathy connect the terror of the war in Viet Nam to more contemporary preoccupations with the “war on terror” in the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia.

One of the most lasting transnational legacies of the war, of course, is the diaspora of millions of Vietnamese citizens and the complex cultural memory of the war and its legacies this diasporic process created. In “Việt Nam’s Growing Pains: Postsocialist Cinema Development and Transnational Politics,” Mariam B. Lam explores the contours of transnational Vietnamese cultural production, delineating how a rapidly growing global cultural tourism that requires the interdependence of the new transnational circulation of cultural forms, such as Vietnamese film, with a state’s political-economic needs reveals ways in which academic approaches make manifest complex constructions of social and world cultural memory. Socialist realist cinema, cultural history and educational curricula, U.S. film festivals and tours, and anticommunist protest all infect the contemporary study of Vietnamese and diasporic film. Traveling filmmakers and artists, as well as postcolonial critics, she argues, must contend with such problems when invoking alternative forms of social and economic justice within the postwar socialist Vietnamese state and across international waters when the state itself is similarly working

toward strengthening its global cultural value and authority within the international community. By exploring the intersection of these local and global forces through the work of filmmakers such as Đặng Nhật Minh, Bùi Thạc Chuyên, Lu'u Hu'ynh, and Mirabelle Ang, Lam also shows how the tools of academic disciplining create the conditions of possibility for the production of Vietnamese cultural studies.

It is not only at the level of culture that Viet Nam has sought to develop a broader international presence. Export-oriented trade has likewise driven the country's developing global profile, though often without the warm embrace its cultural strategies have engendered. In "A Fishy Affair: Vietnamese Seafood and the Confrontation with U.S. Neoliberalism," Scott Laderman examines the developing bilateral trade relationship of the United States and Viet Nam since the last decade of the twentieth century, focusing in particular on how U.S. politicians and trade officials attempted to undermine Vietnamese economic growth in the area of catfish exports. With Viet Nam's substantial entry into the American seafood market, U.S. producers, with the assistance of elected officials, fought back, attempting not only to argue that the Vietnamese were guilty of "dumping" their product at unfair prices but also drawing on racist arguments and the war's legacy—in particular, the American employment of Agent Orange in the 1960s and 1970s—as a rationale for denying the entry of Vietnamese seafood into the United States. "Never trust a catfish with a foreign accent," one anti-Vietnamese advertisement instructed, while American partisans in the trade dispute warned against dioxin-infested catfish that grew up "flapping around in Third World rivers" and dining on "whatever [they] could get [their] grubby little fins on." Laderman shows how all sides drew on the memory and legacies of the war, leading to situations in which American catfish farmers and their allies constructed narratives of victimization in the face of "unwarranted Vietnamese aggression." For the Vietnamese, this was a sobering and ironic lesson in what the country's turn to "market" reforms portended, as the United States, which for so many years attempted to remake the southern Vietnamese economy in its own capitalist image, was now using state-based protectionist measures to punish Vietnamese farmers who had embraced the principles of globalized "free trade."

Few war-related issues resonate more deeply among Vietnamese and Americans today than the legacy of those chemical defoliants employed by the United States in Southeast Asia. In "Agent Orange: Coming to

Terms with a Transnational Legacy,” Diane Niblack Fox unpacks a number of the interdisciplinary threads tightly woven into the fabric of what we mean when we talk about “Agent Orange”: medical science, public policy, law, humanitarian efforts, history, and lived experience. With Agent Orange, an enigmatic issue that has persisted for nearly half a century despite various attempts to define and resolve it through science and politics, Fox links local to global and individual lives to national policies across divides of time and space, across borders of nations, as well as those of class, wealth, gender, and ethnicity, with meanings that slip from person to person and from context to context and referents that range from the technical to the experiential and the metaphoric. Through her exploration of Agent Orange and its multivalent, location-specific meanings, Fox explores how individuals and institutions within and beyond the boundaries of the nation-state have constructed the meaning of the term “Agent Orange” and, in doing so, bridges the gap between discourses at the official, diplomatic, and state levels and the experiences of victims who are both the object and the subject of those discourses.

Bridging perspectives from the United States and Viet Nam, Charles Waugh investigates cultural attitudes toward the environment in contemporary Vietnamese and Vietnamese American literary writing. His essay, “Refuge to Refuse: Seeking Balance in the Vietnamese Environmental Imagination,” begins with a discussion of the longstanding environmental theme in Vietnamese culture that is ubiquitous in its folk tales, folk wisdom, and folk poetry. During the American war—and in the literary representations of that war—this folk reliance on the environment was validated in another way: as a refuge or, sometimes, as a sacred place where the spirits of the dead still lingered. “The forests protect our soldiers but encircle our enemy,” reportedly said Ho Chi Minh, who was photographed at Tet planting a tree in an act memorialized in several “public service” posters during the war. More recently, however, that time-honored and war-tested cultural basis in the environment has been challenged, if not supplanted, by a sense of expediency for economic growth and development. There is something startling, for instance, in the fact that the chemical companies Dow and Monsanto, which are widely despised for their wartime collusion with the U.S. military over the spraying of Agent Orange, today do a brisk business supplying Vietnamese farmers with agricultural chemicals and the general public with all sorts of household products. Waugh also explores a deviation between this older

cultural basis in the environment and the exponentially increasing demand for supposed “virility enhancing” wildlife products, which is probably not a coincidence, since industrial pollutants are known to cause endocrine- and reproductive-system problems. As an enormous market has opened for Vietnamese men to consume bear bile, rice wine mixed with various snake parts, and all sorts of other, often critically endangered, wildlife species, the result is that in the present the Vietnamese environment has yet again fallen under a serious, multipronged attack, only this time it is the Vietnamese themselves who are responsible. Drawing on a range of literary sources, Waugh examines how economic expediency has managed to supplant this tradition.

Finally, H. Bruce Franklin, in “Missing in Action in the Twenty-First Century,” explores what has been perhaps the most explosive and sustained political and cultural legacy in the United States of the American experience in Southeast Asia: the POW/MIA issue. For two decades following the war, the United States refused, in considerable part due to the potency of the belief that Viet Nam continued to hold live American prisoners, to normalize relations with its former enemy, choosing instead to squeeze Viet Nam both economically and diplomatically. Synthesizing his groundbreaking work on the issue in *M.I.A., or, Mythmaking in America* and, more recently, *Vietnam and Other American Fantasies*, Franklin brings this history up to date by addressing the resurrection of concerns about POW/MIAs in the first decade of the twenty-first century, such as in the Iraq war in 2003 and the presidential campaign of John McCain in 2008. While the important recent work of Michael Allen has deepened and complicated our understandings of the roots of the POW/MIA issue, the activists and everyday actors who carried the torch of the POW/MIA movement, and the role of both in recent American politics, Franklin’s work continues to provide a broad framework for understanding the politics of memory in “post-Vietnam” America.¹³

Irony and Contradiction in Transnational Memory

Taken as a whole, these essays demonstrate a number of themes that emerge from interdisciplinary and transnational approaches to the legacies of the Second Indochina War. First, they show convincingly the links between nation and narration to which postcolonial literary critics and memory scholars have long implored historians and other social scien-

tists to pay greater attention. At the level of state-based actors and official discourse, Walter Hixson, Alexander Bloom, and H. Bruce Franklin all demonstrate the problematic ways in which state-sanctioned narratives that denote the “meaning” of the war have been put to a variety of uses, from justifying punitive trade embargoes and market-based “reforms” to justifying a renewed and enhanced militarism. In each of these cases, we are reminded of Ernest Renan’s axiom that forgetting, and even “historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation.”¹⁴ The United States and Viet Nam have been made and remade not only by wars and the narratives they engender, but also by what those narratives and the institutions and individuals who produce and disseminate them remember and forget.

As a host of other essays in the collection make clear, however, even official narratives must contend with the ways in which memory, conflict, and trauma are inscribed in and through artistic expression, cultural commodities, and everyday life. In this formulation, both Heonik Kwon’s study of everyday practices of memory and reconciliation and Viet Thanh Nguyen’s explorations of cosmopolitanism, empathy, and compassion serve as powerful counternarratives to the efforts described by Hixson and Franklin purposefully to forget the effects of war on the objects of its violence and to ignore the effects of war on those who fight it. Similarly, Mariam Lam situates various forms of cultural production by diasporic Vietnamese actors as transnational challenges and alternatives to state-based narratives, practices, and policies promoted by the Vietnamese government. The relatives of the millions of Vietnamese martyrs who populate the country’s graves—marked and unmarked, official and improvised—across sites throughout the region also serve as a reminder of both the power and limits of state-sanctioned narratives. In Christina Schwenkel’s telling, the complex transnational memoryscape of Khe Sanh both complements and complicates state-intended meanings and “reveal[s] the ways in which unreconciled pasts and the trauma that endures in landscapes, bodies, and memory are provisionally, though unevenly, resolved.”

The global flows of people, capital, and ideas that form the heart of the transnational frameworks described in these essays in many cases have undermined official state practices, particularly in Viet Nam. Indeed, the essays lend weight to the argument made recently by Mark Bradley that, since the beginning of *doi moi*, the Vietnamese state “has increasingly lost

the ability to control the memory of the war.”¹⁵ But other essays in the volume remind us of the stubborn persistence of state authority and state power in both the United States and Viet Nam. The same types of ironies and contradictions that arise from contests over cultural production and memorialization practices can be seen in the implementation of global political and economic frameworks at national and local levels. The same global flows that so easily transcend and transgress national boundaries are often negotiated, sanctioned, and supported by the very states they are supposedly undermining. Scott Laderman provides a powerful example of this, exploding the myth of global free markets so regularly championed by the United States by showing how bilateral “free trade” agreements—and the global capitalist infrastructure on which they rest—can be easily turned into tools of official protectionism, serving powerful interests and powerful nations at the expense of disenfranchised producers and developing states. Similarly, Charles Waugh shows how, in its rush to embrace that very development model, the Vietnamese government has jettisoned that nation’s long tradition of balanced environmentalism and, along with it, has willingly exposed its citizens to the pernicious social and environmental effects of global capital. Diane Fox also shows us some of the ways in which nations still matter a great deal, given the refusal of the United States to come to terms with the legacy of the chemical war it waged in Viet Nam over many years. While a number of individual actors have shaped and been shaped by the multiple embodiments of Agent Orange—as science, law, history, and experience—the fight for environmental and social justice around these discourses remains thwarted by the state-based sovereignty of the U.S. government responsible for the spraying and by the increasingly elusive and disembodied power of the transnational chemical corporations who facilitated it.

All of the essays in this volume suggest that an interdisciplinary and transnational approach to the legacies of the Second Indochina War must be grounded in the spaces, ironies, and contradictions embodied in the narratives, policies, and practices that shape and are shaped by the intersections of nation-states and transnational flows, state and nonstate actors, the global and the local. They remind us that the legacies of the Vietnam War are significant not only for the ways in which they shaped geopolitics and international relations in the second half of the twentieth century but also for the ways in which they continue to shape everyday life for millions of citizens around the world. If Renan was right, finally—

if nations are defined largely by what they collectively forget about the past—then perhaps this collection also suggests a way forward: that by embracing a transnational approach to war and memory, we can offer at least a modest intervention against the seemingly inexorable march of historical amnesia.

A QUICK NOTE ON STYLE: Readers will notice that some authors have chosen to use the Vietnamese diacritics; others have not. We opted for consistency within chapters rather than the entire volume. Readers will also notice that “Vietnam” and “Viet Nam” both appear in the text. This is not an editorial oversight. We have used “Viet Nam” to refer to the place called Viet Nam, as we wish to reinforce that Viet Nam is not simply—as it is often treated in the United States—an American discursive construction. We have, however, retained the use of “Vietnam” when it appears in quoted material, titles, or names, or when referring to the Vietnam War, Vietnam veterans, the Vietnam syndrome, and other denotations of the American imagination. This would include, in our view, “North Vietnam” and “South Vietnam.”

Notes

1. Lepore, *The Name of War*, xv. For more on the politics of language associated with the war, see Laderman, *Tours of Vietnam*, ix–xii.

2. This definition is based on the approach laid out in Basch et al., *Nations Unbound*, 7.

3. Lepore, *The Name of War*, x–xi.

4. For more on this trend in the historiography, see Bradley, *Vietnam at War*, 3.

5. For a sampling of these works, see Gaiduk, *The Soviet Union and the Vietnam War*; Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars*; Daum et al., *America, the Vietnam War, and the World*; Lawrence, *Assuming the Burden*; Rabel, *New Zealand and the Vietnam War*; Bradley and Young, *Making Sense of the Vietnam Wars*.

6. Among the many recent works in this area are Catton, *Diem's Final Failure*; Jacobs, *America's Miracle Man in Vietnam*; Miller, “Vision, Power, and Agency”; Chapman, “Staging Democracy”; Carter, *Inventing Vietnam*; Masur, “Exhibiting Signs of Resistance.” Much of the trend in both internationalization and an earlier chronological focus followed the publication of Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America*.

7. Elliott, *The Vietnamese War*; Hunt, *Vietnam's Southern Revolution*.

8. Miller and Vu, "The Vietnam War as a Vietnamese War." Accompanying essays in that issue of the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* by François Guillemot, Busarawan Teerawichitchainan, Shawn McHale, David Biggs, and Peter Hansen explore a range of fascinating topics within this larger theme.

9. Among the landmark works on the post-1975 period in U.S.-Viet Nam relations and the cultural memory of the Second Indochina War are Duiker, *Vietnam since the Fall of Saigon*; Franklin, *M.I.A.*; Lembcke, *The Spitting Image*. More recent works that have sought to build on these studies include Schulzinger, *A Time for Peace*; Martini, *Invisible Enemies*; Laderman, *Tours of Vietnam*; Kuzmarov, *The Myth of the Addicted Army*; Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home*. From the perspective of Vietnamese, Tai, *In the Country of Memory*, paved the way for recent studies of war memory that have tended to come from more anthropological and transnational perspectives, including Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam*; Schwenkel, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam*. See also the roundtable on the publication of *The Diary of Đặng Thùy Trâm* in the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 3, no. 2 (June 2008).

10. Nguyen's work on the "post-Tet" war and on Hanoi's role in undermining the possibility of greater reconciliation vis-à-vis the Provisional Revolutionary Government is in Nguyen, "Cold War Contradictions"; Nguyen, *Hanoi's War*. Quinn-Judge's informative essay "From the *Quiet American* to the Paris Peace Conference" offers yet another take on the possibilities, and ultimate demise, of the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

11. For more on the American need for postwar "healing," see Hagopian, *The Vietnam War in American Memory*.

12. Among the large number of fascinating recent works on the 1970s, see Borstelmann, *The 1970s*; Zaretsky, *No Direction Home*; Schulman and Zelizer, *Rightward Bound*; Kalman, *Right Star Rising*; Rodgers, *The Age of Fracture*; Cowie, *Stayin' Alive*.

13. Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home*.

14. Renan, "What Is a Nation?," 11.

15. Bradley, *Vietnam at War*, 185.