

## Representing Reconciliation: Le Ly Hayslip and the Victimized Body

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Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization.—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Among those duties falling to her lot,  
a woman's chastity means many things.  
For there are times of ease and times of stress:  
in crisis, must one rigid rule apply?  
True daughter, you upheld a woman's role:  
what dust or dirt could ever sully you?  
—Nguyen Du

Le Ly Hayslip now has the dubious honor of being the best-known Vietnamese person in the United States, joining the ranks of other best-known

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Vietnamese that have included the politically unsavory Ngo Dinh Diem and his sister-in-law, Madame Nhu (who clapped her hands at the sight of Buddhist monks “barbecuing” themselves). Of course, Hayslip is a very different person from Diem and Nhu, but she shares at least one thing in common with them, namely their status as useful symbols in the United States’ debate over its involvement in Viet Nam during the course of the war and after. Diem was the great American hope and then the great American policy disaster, a puppet dictator who proved to be too inflexible to be useful as a nationalist hero; and Nhu, nicknamed the “Dragon Lady” by the American press, preceded Imelda Marcos in the American imagination. Hayslip stands as if in contrast to these and other assorted, lesser politicians and generals who came to represent for Americans either the incompetence of a client-nation or the villainy of a repressive nationalist regime.

Through her autobiographical books *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* and *Child of War, Woman of Peace*, Hayslip has become representative of those anonymous millions of Vietnamese in whose name the war was fought by both sides. Through her extraordinary personal story, she not only symbolically bears their collective pain, but also the victim’s burden of forgiveness.<sup>1</sup> Her credibility as witness, survivor, and moral truthsayer all depend upon the evidence of her body—that is, her pain and her experiences, and their consequent rewriting—and upon how this display is read, by both Americans and Vietnamese Americans.<sup>2</sup> Hayslip stresses her lack of education and seeming rustic simplicity as a disarming stratagem to win over the reader; her artlessness is designed to draw attention away from her narrative’s artfulness, lending more credence to the visceral pain of her life and its seemingly direct relation to her narrative. In doing this, Hayslip joins the ranks of many other witnesses to history whose authenticity and value for a political debate over history, memory, and responsibility is staked upon the body and its experiences.

This body is the victim’s body, the body-as-evidence, and it exists in two dimensions: one that is imposed (in this case by American discourse) and one that is self-imposed. These impositions constitute the discursive dimensions of the body. It is these discursive dimensions and the fiction of a pre-discursive victim’s body that they project that this essay will explore. It is through her representation of the body—the self-imposed dimension—

that Hayslip is able to address the demands of American discourse and, to a secondary extent, the expectations of a Vietnamese audience. Throughout, I will argue for the centrality of the body in Hayslip's text and in the contexts of the Viet Nam War, as well as its central location in the development of global capitalism. The victim's body that is imposed in American discourse is a powerless one, a silent figure whose presence is only of micrological, isolated significance in the movements of armies, nations, and capital; the victim's body that Hayslip uses has a voice and demonstrates her integral, macrological importance to these movements.

In the imposed dimension of American discourse, Hayslip typifies the function of the Vietnamese in American debates over the war, which pivot on the unspoken (or spoken-for) locus of the Vietnamese body. From the self-immolation of Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc to the My Lai Massacre to the "boat people," Vietnamese bodies have been the silent spectacle on which American historical writing has been staged. These images are by now icons in the American consciousness, and this only enforces Trinh T. Minh-ha's argument that Viet Nam exists only as a spectacle for the West.<sup>3</sup> Until very recently, no significant American discourse—popular or academic—had attempted to change the terms of the debate by creating an opening for a Vietnamese perspective on the war. Rather, American discourse granted the Vietnamese the problematic status of the truthsayer: desired to speak yet despised for the ability to speak, someone who, when and if he or she spoke, would articulate the incomprehensible or heretofore unspeakable.

The Vietnamese subject this essay is concerned with is created within American discourse, and her speech is conditioned by this discursive context; this essay is not concerned with foregrounding the extensive cultural and political speech produced out of North, South, or reunified Viet Nam because that speech is already unheard within American discourse, and it is partially these discursive limits, this deafness, that this essay will interrogate. Before that moment when the Vietnamese subject of American discourse spoke, the images of Vietnamese bodies were the tertiary contested territory on which, from the American perspective, the war was fought—after the primary, actual battleground and the secondary, mediated level of the portrayals of American troops.<sup>4</sup> Antiwar protesters used "objective" photo-

graphs of atrocities to demonstrate the inhumanity of the war; supporters of the war fought back by attempting to discredit the stories behind these images. The classic example of this is the My Lai Massacre; despite photographic evidence and eyewitness accounts, much of the American population refused to believe that the massacre actually occurred.<sup>5</sup> The body has always been used in times of crisis to galvanize conscience, from American abolitionism to the “crusade” against Iraq to African famine relief. When this succeeds, the silence of the victim’s body is taken as evidence of its pre-discursive claim to truth, its resistance to the discursive wrangling over meaning and political usefulness.

In the case of the Vietnamese, however, the body that was objectified during the war is now asked to speak *within American discourse* to provide a resolution to the unfinished U.S. debate over the war. As we shall see, the fiction of prediscursivity that adheres in the victim’s body in its imposed or self-imposed dimension becomes evident in the inability of American discourse to provide conclusive answers about the American experience in Viet Nam as long as that discourse is premised on the victim’s body. Hayslip nevertheless inserts her representation of her self and her body into that perceived gap between prediscursivity and discourse. She is distinct from the cast of ambiguous heroes and villains that comprise recent Vietnamese political history because, unlike them, she has moved from being a silent “subaltern” to being a speaker and a spokesperson for the living and the dead. She enters the discursive dimension by reappropriating the victim’s body, by seeking to relocate exactly where the prediscursive body is supposed to lie; instead of being a body victimized by American warfare, and thus defined by its contact with the United States, she locates her victim’s body in a nostalgic fiction of Viet Nam as agrarian, precapitalist, and fundamentally stable and “natural” in its social organization.

In rewriting this victim’s body and making it her own, she is caught, to use her own expression, “in between”—Viet Nam and the United States, war and peace, hell and heaven, and, for my concerns, the needs of “representation” and “reconciliation.” Her important status in such a conflict of oppositions is predicated precisely on the extent to which Hayslip previously belonged to the subaltern classes of Viet Nam, those “voiceless” characters in the drama of everyday warfare and everyday resistance. She writes

and speaks with the authority of “authentic” experiences, an authority that is simultaneously undercut by its perceived subjective limitations. In this movement from mass silence to individual speech, Hayslip wavers between providing a relatively complete, representative account of her location as a Third World woman in a global conflict of capital and ideology focused in Viet Nam, and the imperative for a personal and collective reconciliation on the part of all the war’s participants. An attempt at accurate representation (what Fredric Jameson would call the “cognitive mapping”) of her location in global capitalism conflicts with the needs of reconciliation, which dictates the rejection of that mapping and a deliberately partial representation. The common unresolved history of both nations still has cultural, political, and economic ramifications today, but the problems for Viet Nam are far more dire.<sup>6</sup>

This essay will chart that wavering, that dialectical but unresolvable movement between representation and reconciliation, a movement that inexorably gestures toward the intimate connections of cold war domino-theory politics, the global expansion of capitalism, and the creation of peripheral labor markets and exploitable migratory populations—specifically, refugee and immigrant women—in Hayslip’s journey from Viet Nam to the United States. These political and economic processes are discursive but also fundamentally bodily, as they are dependent in varying degrees on people’s labor, which supports the accumulation of surplus value and the promotion of consumption in the core nations, and the extraction of resources from the peripheral nations. These processes are simultaneously brought to light and ultimately obscured by the concluding moments of reconciliation found in both of Hayslip’s books, which, as we shall see, are dependent upon the rewriting of her body as “natural,” in both the prediscursive sense and the unalienated sense. To chart that wavering, this essay is divided into three parts: the first devoted to the “context” of global capitalism; the second, to Hayslip’s “text” and the war itself; and the third section returning to a reconsideration of the context in light of the textual analysis. Yet this division is arbitrary, for the context is being read like a text, while Hayslip’s text will provide a different perspective, an alternative context, from which to look back at global capitalism’s development from Viet Nam. Ultimately, what we will see is how Hayslip attempts not only to reconcile the United

States to Viet Nam, but also to reconcile herself to other overseas Vietnamese who perceive her as whore, traitor, and self-promoter. Thus, Hayslip's retreat to reconciliation serves one function for global capitalism and for the interests of Americans after the war, and yet another for her Vietnamese readers. She performs the former function through adopting the guise of, and being adopted as, the emblematic (female) victim, and she accomplishes the latter by becoming the emblematic heroine of classical Vietnamese literature—the ideal woman who retains her spiritual virtue in the face of overwhelming circumstances that deprive her of her “chastity.” In either case, it is the totality of the damage inflicted on the body, represented as a prediscursive phenomenon, that provides the basis of “truth” in the discursive dimensions. Hayslip, facing the impossibility of providing a complete representation of the relations between Viet Nam and the United States, turns to her victim's body, which can be exploited and rewritten, as a way of reconciling herself and her readers to her status as a woman caught up in the contradictory demands of globalizing capital and traditional culture.

### **Fractured Speech: The “Third World Woman” in Global Capitalism**

Unfolding the complications of “representation” is crucial in the discussion of any “postcolonial” or “minority” cultural production, inasmuch as representation not only entails the presence of a speaking individual, but the presence of a speaking class: this is the idea of the collective on which the “postcolonial” or the “minority” is implicitly staked. The class is usually forgotten for the sake of the individual, as Gayatri Spivak argues when she draws a distinction between two frequently conflated forms of representation, the micrological and the macrological: the former is concerned only with the speech of the individual, while the latter is concerned with maximizing those conditions that allow speech for all people. For Spivak, who is here following Marx's argument in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, a multidimensional political speech can only come about when a subject is represented in both senses of the word, for speech is not just an individual action, but an individual action made possible by a certain degree of political and economic autonomy—an autonomy that may be denied to a

group of people otherwise “represented” by a lone speaker. This latter case implies a singular model of representation that assumes a politically uncomplicated, undivided subject whose representative can be supposed to speak in the interests of the oppressed. The reality of the matter is that the “oppressed” may have representatives who speak *for* them politically, but *against* them economically, in the sense of furthering the reproduction of a global capitalism that needs the “oppressed” to facilitate its operation, either by working in peripheral employment or by simply disappearing.

Understanding the inherently doubled and sometimes contradictory meaning of representation is fundamental to interpreting the use of the Vietnamese in American depictions of the war. Conversely, a simplistic model of representation serves the needs of numerous U.S. military veteran artists and intellectuals who see in the recuperation of Viet Nam the potential for their own recuperation. These artists and intellectuals have participated in a postwar American debate over the meanings, motivations, and justifications of the war. The debate has been rhetorical, but with real material impact since the rhetorical is implicated in a social formation encompassing the military, economic, and political realities of the war and its aftermath for both nations. Neil Jamieson expresses one way rhetoric and politics are tied together for the United States when he says that “we must learn more about Vietnamese culture and Vietnamese paradigms in order to untangle the muddled debates about our own. . . . this is the first and most important lesson of Vietnam.”<sup>7</sup> This perceived need to understand oneself and the character of one’s nation is more than a gesture at collective therapy for a generation; it also offers the regeneration of a collective, American national will, one that has always viewed history with a selective memory. In response to a 1985 conference of writers and veterans of the Viet Nam “experience,” Timothy Lomperis writes, “Whether we, as individuals, liked the war or not, protested it or supported it, for this scarred generation that is now coming to power in the United States, the Vietnam War is the undeniable gateway to Asia—and to ourselves.”<sup>8</sup> Despite his own good intentions, Lomperis indicates that the unfulfilled national westward impulse showcased in the works of Cooper, Melville, and Whitman, among many others, still has currency today. Whitman expresses this frustrated impulse in “Facing West from California’s Shores,” that is, facing

Asia, when he writes, “the circle almost circled. . . . Long having wander’d since, round the earth having wander’d, / Now I face home again, very pleas’d and joyous, / But where is what I started for so long ago? / And why is it yet unfound?”<sup>9</sup> The symmetrical wholeness of Viet Nam in *Heaven and Earth*, Oliver Stone’s film version of Hayslip’s books, represents an attempt to answer Whitman’s question, which in its longing evokes the American quest for meaning and resolution after the Viet Nam War. In a healed and whole Viet Nam, west of California’s shores, lies the healing for Americans still conflicted over their experiences in the war.

Stone’s healing, however, is figured through one woman’s story, in a strategy typical of the simplified representation of Vietnamese refugees. Thomas A. DuBois states that “one of the most important versions of the refugee model in popular discourse is the construct of the *emblematic victim*.”<sup>10</sup> The “emblematic victim,” which can also be understood as the American-imposed version of the body-as-evidence, serves an unproblematic notion of representation in which Stone’s film participates. This version makes no difference between representative and represented; that is, the fact that one of the oppressed speaks is taken to mean that the oppressed in general have spoken. This production of an uncomplicated and undivided “oppressed subject” implicitly allows the production of an uncomplicated and undivided “unoppressed” (and non-oppressing) subject. In terms of the American debates around U.S. involvement in Viet Nam, it is the American veteran-intellectuals who can absolve themselves through the speech of the Vietnamese. This absolution is done by paying lip service to the “oppressed” Vietnamese, by seizing on or lifting up “representative” speakers for admiration while ignoring the uncomfortable realities of those whom these speakers ostensibly represent—realities in which the First World subject is materially implicated.<sup>11</sup> In Stone’s film and Hayslip’s books, this version of representation is configured in the healing of woman and country, in which the healing of the former metonymically and metaphorically replaces and thereby ostensibly foreshadows the actual healing of the latter.

Yet, while the reconstruction of Viet Nam is made possible in part by an extension of current U.S. economic practices into the country, those practices are inseparable from a global economy with a Third World labor force comprised mostly of women. Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that it is



“within this framework of multinational employment, through an analysis of the ideological construction of the ‘third world woman worker’ (the stereotypical [ideal] worker employed by world market factories) that we can trace the links of sexist, racist, class-based structures internationally.”<sup>12</sup> It is through the figure of a representative “third world woman” like Hayslip that we will examine the complicated issue of whether this reconstruction is a “healing.”<sup>13</sup> This economic reconstruction is summarized in the clichéd expression that the United States “lost the war but won the peace”; this banality only makes sense when we expand the definition of the war to encompass the economic and political as well as the military dimensions. Certainly the politics of cold war territorialism and brinksmanship motivated the United States to intervene in Viet Nam, with the long-term benefit to the United States being the containment of communism, which threatened to “infect” nations such as the Philippines and Malaysia—sources of cheap labor, tourism, and/or military bases. Significantly for Hayslip, this type of “third world” economy exists not only in Asia, but also, as she experiences, in Silicon Valley computer plants and California defense industries.

Hayslip is a fine candidate for a representative speaker, being an exceptional, not a stereotypical, “third world woman” (it is the irony of a simplified mode of representation that it often chooses the unique rather than the commonplace as its hallmark value). Part of Hayslip’s uniqueness derives from her nation, the only one to defeat two First World nations in war. This national exceptionalism is compounded by Viet Nam’s place in the history of capitalism, the economic subtext to the American ideological debate over the United States’ actions there. This debate has developed during a signal shift in the nature of capitalism over the past twenty-five years, since the peak of American involvement in Viet Nam in 1968, the year of the Tet offensive. David Harvey argues that the late sixties saw a global crisis, as Fordism, the dominant mode of capitalist economic organization for most of the twentieth century, reached its limits.<sup>14</sup> Within the First World, Fordism’s creation of a split-level employment environment privileging white males and discriminating against all others combined with an increasing level of state bureaucratization and the standardization of mass culture to produce the counterculture, civil rights, and minority move-

ments; the Third World, whose material resources and labor proved fundamental to First World development, witnessed

discontents at a modernization process that promised development, emancipation from want, and full integration into Fordism, but which delivered destruction of local cultures, much oppression, and various forms of capitalist domination in return for rather meagre gains in living standards and services (e.g., public health) for any except a very affluent indigenous elite that chose to collaborate actively with international capital. Movements towards national liberation—sometimes socialist but more often bourgeois-nationalist—focused many of these discontents in ways that sometimes appeared quite threatening to global Fordism.<sup>15</sup>

Nowhere was this move toward national liberation more threatening, Aijaz Ahmad argues, than in the Viet Nam War, where the global contradiction between “revolutionary anticolonialism; the most advanced socialist political practice in the most backward peasant economy; the direct, historic, prolonged combat between socialism and imperialism; [and] the utterly unequal balance of forces—was condensed.”<sup>16</sup> The “local” conflict in Viet Nam, therefore, had a number of global resonances for Americans: the failure of anticommunist containment policies and of American “democratizing” and American military might; the failure to comprehend the “oriental” mind, at the same moment when Asian and Arab nations were poised to enter (or to make their presence felt in) the global economy in force. All of these failures occurred in a world Americans perceived as Manichean, divided between good and evil, democratic and totalitarian, capitalist and communist. In short, the American war in Viet Nam was not only a political crisis for Americans, but implicitly an economic crisis with global implications as well.

This crisis was compounded by two related factors. The first was the overaccumulation of capital and labor that led to the need for new spaces for capitalist development; the second was “the growth of trade and direct investments, and the exploration of new possibilities for the exploitation of labour power.”<sup>17</sup> The situation in Viet Nam was considered a threat to this search for new spaces. Today, Viet Nam is perceived by many Americans and most entrepreneurial interests as one of those necessary “new spaces”

for the expansion of capitalism. The second factor was the advent of what Harvey calls the regime of “flexible accumulation,” which succeeded Fordism. Flexible accumulation promoted the downsizing of high-wage labor forces, the increasing mobility of transnational corporations, the lowering of trade barriers, the proliferation of multiple, simultaneous, and sometimes seemingly anachronistic labor systems (Fordist, artisanal, familial, domestic, patriarchal), and the continuous search for low-wage, disposable labor—again, a search that has focused on Viet Nam.

The advent of flexible accumulation, a hallmark of the globalization of capitalism, has resulted in the corollary formation of what Fredric Jameson terms the “cultural dominant” of postmodernism. Both Jameson and Harvey make significant arguments concerning the nature of subjectivity and its consequences for representation. For Jameson, the postmodern subject is fragmented rather than alienated, as he or she was in modernism. Modernist alienation for Jameson implies that one is alienated *from something*—from some center which is now absent. Under postmodernism, the possibilities for coherent political action vanish with the possibility for a coherent understanding of how one fits into a globally organized world. Similarly, Harvey states that the fragmentation of the subject occurs as the economy becomes both globalized and decentralized: that is, as capitalism becomes the dominant mode of production, it simultaneously promotes population migration, crosscultural “hybridization,” transnational corporatism, and the phenomenon of what Trinh T. Minh-ha calls the “Third World within the First, and vice versa”;<sup>18</sup> all of these processes contribute to the increasing ineffectiveness of national borders as impermeable containers of culture, homogenous identity, and autonomous political economies.

But this slide towards globalization, fragmentation, and heterogeneity does not go without protest, although it is naively celebrated by some. Harvey sums up the progress of capitalism and the reaction against it by saying that “at such times of fragmentation and economic insecurity . . . the desire for stable values leads to a heightened emphasis upon the authority of basic institutions—the family, religion, the state.”<sup>19</sup> In short, global capitalism is paradoxically characterized by a totalization of its fragmented mode of production; it also generates a reaction (it is yet to be seen if this an equal one) in the shape of xenophobia, ethnic tribalism, religious fundamentalism, and

the reaffirmations of so-called traditional values. Like all universals, it has the tendency to be accepted as natural and is related to the division of representation into micrological and macrological dimensions. It is, then, in this era of fractured and obscured representation that Hayslip forms her work and that we read it. Viet Nam served an important function in this era as the focal point of ideological and violent conflict between capitalism and communism, and it will continue to serve in a crucial role as one of the new areas of development and rejuvenation for global capitalism.<sup>20</sup>

The rest of this essay focuses on Hayslip's refusal to accept the conditions of anonymity and passivity that would seem to be her lot in the face of the inevitable spread of global capitalism, which is intent on consuming Viet Nam as one of the last ostensibly noncapitalist holdouts. To some extent, she conforms to James C. Scott's argument that the limits of peasant resistance in Malaysia are not dictated by ideological constraints, as Gramsci argues through his notion of hegemony, but by material limitations. That is, while peasants can be quite astute in analyzing the sources of their oppression, they are literally forced to abide by them—in other words, the forcible suppression of the body through violence supersedes the need for discursive control. The basic dialectic in Hayslip's works moves between a macrological representation, which attempts to present a complete account of the forces of oppression, and a micrological representation, which presses the need for reconciliation, in the guise of the individual subject who faces the overwhelming nature of that oppression under the inevitable globalization of capital. Hayslip-as-representative shuttles between these dialectical opposites, reproducing on a textual and figurative level her own circuitous journey between her two nations.

### **Incomplete Gestures: Representing the Body between Viet Nam and the United States**

The political, social, and cultural disruption that American intervention brings to Viet Nam, which is portrayed in *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (hereafter referred to as *Heaven and Earth*), is only the effect of causes that Hayslip will find in the United States; likewise, some of the trauma that Hayslip experiences in the United States, which is described in *Child of*

*War, Woman of Peace* (hereafter referred to as *Child of War*), is caused by foreign factors: to read either volume separately—*Heaven and Earth*, which focuses mostly on the trauma undergone by South Vietnamese society and on effects of the American war that have long been acknowledged, or *Child of War*, whose criticism of American material excess and cultural strangeness can be read simply as an immigrant's tale of adjustment and as a melting pot cross-cultural critique—is to separate two parts of an extended argument; the two volumes are the foreign and domestic extremes of a continuum. The critical tendency to disregard the links between the two volumes is one major way in which Hayslip's political critique is contained. The central rhetorical dimension of Hayslip's text, and the dimension where her political critique is most subtly staged, involves her use of the body, both the American one and her own. In this portion of my essay, it is the body-in-technology—the body of the victimizer—that will be examined; this is contrasted with the body-in-nature—the body of the victim, the body-as-evidence—which is the subject of the next section. Through these representations of the body, Hayslip depicts the American belief that masculinity and technology, embodied in Americans, can control femininity and nature, embodied by the Vietnamese. This embodied, gendered split is not particularly original, but it is important that Hayslip represents this masculine and feminine binary within a transnational context, with her body itself becoming the focus of contestatory ideological and economic forces that fatally link Viet Nam and the United States. As her body moves across the Pacific, her awareness of her position in an economic and a sexual order widens from a national context to a transnational one in which U.S. domestic values and foreign policy become intimately intertwined and condemned. As she charts her movement from one country to the next, and her growth into a representative speaker, she also reveals that national borders cannot separate the operations of imperialism and capitalism.

Two discursive realms of the body-in-technology are put forth in Hayslip's work: warfare and medicine. The connection between them is summarized in the following inscription on an American soldier's Zippo lighter: "Let me win your heart and mind or I'll burn your hut down." Winning hearts and minds depended upon American technological ability to provide a "better life" for the Vietnamese, with medical treatment one fore-

grounded method.<sup>21</sup> The American faith in technology's ability to persuade and control the Vietnamese is a version of the colonizer's belief in technology's ability to control nature and the colonized. As Donna Haraway notes, "[colonialist Western discourse] structured the world as an object of knowledge in terms of the appropriation by culture of the resources of nature," with "native" bodies being merely another natural resource.<sup>22</sup>

In Viet Nam, American technology expended itself destructively in a useless effort to subjugate these bodies. Hayslip is quite clear in her understanding of the American perception of the Vietnamese as being just bodies: "The Munros saw faceless Orientals fleeing burning villages, tied up as prisoners, or as rag dolls in a roadside trench. . . . Children and women and old people had been blown to bits and everyone just yawned, because they were *the enemy*."<sup>23</sup> In warfare, the Vietnamese bodies were not granted the same right of humanity accorded to American bodies. As Elaine Scarry argues, this is because the exploitation of the human body is fundamental to the nature of war, not in terms of sheer numbers of dead bodies (for, as she points out, sometimes victories go to the side losing fewer soldiers), but through the meaning that the soldier's dead body gives to his nation's claims, or to put it more accurately, from the meaning that is extracted from his body by the discourse of warfare. Warfare is a conflict over which warring nation's cultural construct will prevail to become a "cultural reality" rather than a "cultural fiction";<sup>24</sup> in the aftermath of victory, the discourse of war uses the material reality of the soldier's dead body to substantiate the nation's cultural claims, making them "real." Thus, from the American perspective, it cannot be that Vietnamese bodies are "really" dying; they must be dehumanized, de-realized, in order to allow for the humanization of the American soldier and the substantiation of *his* body and, through it, of American ideology and culture. It is only in antiwar discourse that the Vietnamese body becomes substantial, as victim rather than enemy; but this seeming substantiation does service in yet another conflict over cultural constructs, one in which the Vietnamese have no direct interest: the internal conflict over the definition of American society. Although it can now substantiate discursive claims, the victim's body here is objectified as the enemy body, because it has no part in the debate between the American political left and right, being instead evidence.

This body-as-evidence is situated, as noted earlier, in a masculine/feminine binary. The binary model serves, as Judith Butler has argued, to affirm a continuity between sex, gender and desire that naturalizes heterosexuality. This naturalization arises from an analogy in which sex is to gender as nature is to culture, with desire and sexual practice consequent to the strict correlation of sex/gender.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, in considering the dimensions of warfare and medicine in which the body-in-technology is embedded, we also have to consider the ways in which the body is eroticized, gendered, and naturalized. In American discourse, the eroticization of the Vietnamese is another degree of objectification, congruent with their objectification as the enemy body, both taking place in the dimension of warfare; Hayslip responds to that objectification with her use of the medical dimension.

Philip Beidler describes the eroticization of war in American discourse in this way: "Against the backdrop of silent, impassive Asia, America's eternal adolescent innocence spends itself in terrible self-induced explosion."<sup>26</sup> The erotic and orientalist suggestiveness of Beidler's prose is rendered explicit, if deracialized, in Susan Jeffords's discussion of American bodies and technology:

These machine guns, shells, and mini-guns are not described as killing . . . or destroying . . . they are described only as their own display, their own theater. . . . In an aesthetic that reproduces machinery as objects of display, technology and the body can be rejoined as "pure sex" in an erotic act that fuses the multiplicity of the fragmented body with the unified power of technological display. No longer pieces of body counts and machine guns, the body is reunified through technology as aesthetic: "you had to stop once in a while and admire the machinery."<sup>27</sup>

For Jeffords, the alienation of the American body from its own functions—from sex and labor, or, respectively, the reproductive and (in this case) the destructive functions—is only temporarily overcome by the eroticism of high technology expending itself in magnificent special effects. Furthermore, it should be clear that the aestheticization of a killing machinery that reunifies the American body also serves to aestheticize death itself—the death of the Vietnamese, that is, rendered as part of the spectacle of special

effects (there is no sense in which the death of Americans in American discourse is ever aestheticized). For the Vietnamese who view this spectacle and identify with those objectified and killed, the erotic aspect of this aestheticization of technology is actually pornographic.

Hayslip, in discussing the death of Vietnamese, poses a distinction between the body-in-technology, which as Beidler and Jeffords show, is privileged in American discourse, and the body-in-nature, which Hayslip will prioritize: "Some of the dead, mostly older people, had been privileged to die in almost natural ways: of starvation, of drowning in a river while fleeing a battle, of exposure while sleeping unprotected in the fields, of failed hearts and tired souls worn out by too much trying. But most were killed by weapons wielded by the French and their Vietnamese allies."<sup>28</sup> These weapons would only become more destructive in the American era, and their effect would be no less to make an "almost natural" death seem a privilege, an exception in the American theater of technological display.

Hayslip's autobiography also counters Jeffords's concept of the body reunified through technology by contrasting military technology in Viet Nam with its ironic opposite, medical technology in the United States. What results is a de-aestheticization and de-eroticization of technology and the body. When she visits her dying first husband, she sees "Poor Ed [lying] in his hospital bed like an old car torn up at the shop—tubes ran in and out of his mouth and arms and legs; sheets and wires were stuffed everywhere; his sunken eyes glowed dimly like headlights on a failing battery. Behind him, a breathing machine hissed like a restless demon, waiting to claim his soul."<sup>29</sup> Ed's body is held together by the machinery, but at the same time the mechanical metaphors suggests that his body is even further fragmented because it is so dissociated from nature. This dissociation, in the very act of trying to preserve that unwilling body, and the body's location in the United States, ironically emphasize the fragmentation of the American body that, in Jeffords's reading, technology is supposed to piece together. Furthermore, the representation of Ed as part-body, part-machine brings to mind Haraway's concept of the late capitalist body as a "cyborg" integrated into a mesh of biotechnical systems, as well as the capitalist dream of the worker-as-machine. Thus, Marx's conception of the worker as enslaved by the technology that has the potential to liberate him is metaphorically illustrated in



Ed's death. Finally, Scarry's argument that the dead body in war substantiates, or realizes, a nation's cultural fiction of itself suggests a connection between the textual representation of Ed's death and the Viet Nam War's role in the development of global capitalism. The death of American bodies in Viet Nam substantiated the socioeconomic system of American capitalism during the cold war; but this substantiation denied the reality both of Vietnamese bodies and of the American working body, which during this time was also becoming increasingly enmeshed with technology, owing to advances in automation, microelectronics, and information and computer technology in the workplace and in medicine, all in the service of late capitalism. As Donald Lowe points out, "biotechnical systems of all sorts are changing received meanings of birth, life, and death"; "laboring bodies, already sorted out in the resegmented labor market, are recoded and redisciplined at the new workplaces," one result of which is the "hazards and stresses" on the body as the result of specific types of work.<sup>30</sup> The increasing gap between the potential of the American economy for its workers during the post-World War II boom years and the actual ability of that economy to provide for its workers, a gap that finds physical expression in the toll on the body, is erased during times of war by the soldier's dead body.

The de-eroticization and denaturalization of the American body and its machinery that Hayslip undertakes is matched by her eroticization and naturalization of the Vietnamese body. This is played out most evidently in two scenes in *Heaven and Earth*, both set in Ky La. In one, after a battle, Hayslip has to bury a handsome young Viet Cong whom she had previously noticed: "Hiding my feelings as I had seen the other women do, I gently covered his face and lifted—embraced—the body's head while my mother took the feet. Together, we lowered him into the dark hole my father had dug and covered him with earth."<sup>31</sup> As if in direct rebuttal to Jeffords's outline of the eroticized, technical spectacle, Hayslip illustrates a notion of death from the Vietnamese perspective that is simultaneously natural and erotic. The "dark hole" in "Mother Earth" suggests both the source of life and the receptacle of death. Women are the guardians at both ends of life, nurturing the products of the earth and their own wombs, and guiding the return of the body to its symbolic birthplace.

In a second scene, this erotic wholeness is reversed and perverted, but also

reinforced, by Hayslip's rape by two Viet Cong who have been ordered to execute her. She says that "the war—these men—had finally ground me down to oneness with the soil, from which I could no longer be distinguished as a person."<sup>32</sup> A circle of identification is completed here, with Hayslip's body being joined with the earth in a metaphor that makes "woman" and "earth" become synonymous: both are trodden upon and raped by men and military technology. With this rape, from the perspective of the Vietnamese woman, Hayslip's victimization at the hands of men, war, and ideology is complete. She found herself caught, as she would later say, "in between" two opposing and relentless forces—the Viet Cong on one side and the Americans and South Vietnamese on the other—who "had finally found the perfect enemy: a terrified peasant girl who would endlessly and stupidly consent to be their victim as all Vietnam's peasants had consented to be victims, from creation to the end of time!"<sup>33</sup>

Hayslip thus finds herself "between patriarchy and imperialism," as Spivak phrases it. The cyclical nature of peasant existence, attuned to the needs of the fields and the changing of the seasons—a type of existence that is "feminine"—proves no match for the more "masculine" aspect of either the patriarchal and authoritarian Confucian gender hierarchy or western imperialist notions that saw expansion and ever-evolving technology as signs of progressive evolution; in either framework, the feminine is a negative position of subordination and stasis. But at the same time, Hayslip's depiction of herself as an object "in between" these ideologies of patriarchy and imperialism finds its complement in her identification of herself as one with the earth: the solidity of the earth makes her self seem that much more substantial and real, an actual body in contrast to the fluctuating character of ideology and war. The binary model that Hayslip draws from—split between genders and sexes, but also split between ideology and reality—presupposes, as Butler argues, the sexed body as "prediscursive," a stable platform on which the binary model is constructed.<sup>34</sup> Against the "cultural" and hence seemingly ephemeral character of the war and its justifications, Hayslip posits her "natural" embodied self, the "victim."

In coming to the United States, Hayslip again seeks to reinforce the nature/culture divide that situates her on the side of nature and the body, with a prediscursive basis that makes her subsequent use of discourse seem

that much more truthful and persuasive. Of Americans in general, she says, “What had their cozy houses and bulging refrigerators and big, fast cars and noisy TV sets really taught them about the world: about back-breaking labor, bone-grinding poverty, and death’s edge starvation?”<sup>35</sup> Here, the signs of being American are all technological, the satisfactions of wants; the signs of being Vietnamese are natural, the satisfaction of bodily needs. Americans in Hayslip’s depiction are participating in what Lowe calls the consumption of lifestyle, which as the “social relations of consumption has overshadowed *class* as the social relations of production [in late capitalism].”<sup>36</sup> Lowe argues that this shift from production to consumption as the new center of social relations, where consumption is both destabilized and valorized, is capitalism’s method of regenerating itself and its project of continual accumulation.

In other words, during industrial capitalism the relationship between production and consumption was premised upon the relative stability of people’s needs and wants. Production, exchange value, and the reproduction of capital constituted the problematic for an analysis of capital. Consumption, use value, and the reproduction of labor were stable and not problematical. In late capitalism, however, the commodity is no longer characterized by its fulfillment of use value in the realm of consumption, but is instead characterized by its fulfillment of artificially created needs—the needs of continually evolving lifestyles that are themselves the prime objects of marketing and advertising. Thus, consumption itself is the target of marketing and advertising, as people are told they “need” a certain type of car or house or TV in order to “be” a particular type of person. It is the body and its needs, Lowe argues, that is the new problematic of late capitalism. Against this late capitalist body, a body that Hayslip characterizes as distinctly American in being stimulated by its manipulated desires, Hayslip poses the “natural” needs of a body not yet valorized by late capitalism.

Through her role as wife, Hayslip highlights this relationship of contrast between the American body—one that is masculine, heterosexual, technological, violent, and consumerist—and her Vietnamese body—feminine, heterosexual, natural, peaceful, and nonconsumerist. Her second husband, Dennis, is a paranoid, fundamentalist Baptist with a penchant for guns, motorcycles, and alcohol. For Dennis, the conjunction of violence and sexu-

ality is displayed in his military service in Korea. "You can't trust any of these army guys, Ly. . . . I was one of them . . . [in] Korea . . . believe me, we played the same games with the poor Korean girls. They meant nothing to us. We used them and just walked away. Nobody pays any attention to promises made in a war zone."<sup>37</sup> Hayslip clearly and angrily expresses her belief that the foreign violence and sexual exploitation committed by the American military are implicitly connected to domestic violence and sexual exploitation, after Dennis kidnaps and abuses their son: "I was shocked, angered, and insulted at the insolence of men. All the American men I had known . . . didn't know about women and didn't respect them. I couldn't believe such men had ever known a mother's love . . . Such atrocities as I had witnessed in both countries could only be perpetuated by men with no awareness of the sacred origins of life. . . . [These men] had no idea where they came from or where they were going. They were men who loved their hunting dogs and guns more than their ancestors."<sup>38</sup> Hayslip contrasts two social orders, one implied in her invocation of "ancestors": ancestor worship is fundamental to Vietnamese life, and, by implication, American society's relegation of its ancestors to the impersonal world of history is related to American men's inability to comprehend the value of the maternal, the value of the life-giving body with which Hayslip has already identified herself.

By calling domestic violence and abuse an "atrocious," Hayslip reintroduces the language of warfare and the victim's body into the American domestic setting, connecting the actions of a veteran like Dennis with the atrocities of American troops in Viet Nam. An atrocity, by definition, is committed upon the body of a defenseless person. Such an act is commonly referred to as unspeakable because it borders on torture, a process that Scarry describes as one in which the torturer destroys the ability of the tortured to speak through overwhelming pain: the torturer's interrogating voice is made totally present while the tortured's body is made totally present; the relationship between body and voice are inverse and total.<sup>39</sup> The reality of torture and atrocity—that is, the all-destroying pain for the victim—is therefore literally unspeakable.<sup>40</sup> The atrocities committed in Viet Nam and described in *Heaven and Earth* could easily be distanced from contemporary American life either as complete aberrations or as past crimes

to feel guilty for, crimes committed by a generation of soldiers that most Americans until recently would have liked to disavow; indeed, the very process of speaking about atrocities necessarily distances the description from the reality, since pain is unique in being that “which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed” except in its being experienced.<sup>41</sup>

As for the Vietnamese, like native Americans, they and their representations could be restricted, even romanticized, as revolutionaries, to a past and a pain that no longer existed: as Trinh T. Minh-ha says, “for general Western spectatorship, Vietnam does not exist outside of the war.”<sup>42</sup> But by locating atrocity in the American home, Hayslip literally brings the war home, identifying the aggressor as an American man who is in no way uncommon: a veteran, a fundamentalist Baptist, a gun lover, and a man who likes his alcohol, country music, and motorcycles. “Could [Americans] imagine their sons and husbands, so peaceful and happy in civilian life, coming into my village and making old men and women beg for their lives? ‘*Xin ong dung giet toi*’—‘Please, sir, don’t kill me!’—was our standard greeting for the American boys in uniform who came our way.”<sup>43</sup> This picture of the connections between American domesticity and foreign terror—through the rhetoric of atrocity dependent on the victim’s body—is one of Hayslip’s most vivid efforts to construct a representative account of how she as an individual is caught up in the forces that bind the United States and Viet Nam.

In the end, this attempt at macrological representation is clouded by her attempt at reconciliation—representation on a micrological scale. This effort is expressed twice, once at the end of each volume. In the first volume, she proclaims herself an American, which is a fitting and traditional conclusion for an autobiographical narrative that, in one reading, traces the development of a foreign refugee into a full-fledged American. In the second, she renounces nationality for the sake of a universality staked on the renunciation of past divisions that are the consequences of human action. At the conclusion of *Child of War*, she addresses her home village this way:

I can tell you now, from firsthand experience, that America is not your enemy and never was, even during the war. Back then, America picked me up when I was scared and bloody and cared for me and educated me

and helped me to raise my three wonderful sons. It made me a citizen and has let me come back with these presents which she gives you freely and without reservations. What she wants more than anything, I think, is to forgive you and be forgiven by you in return.<sup>44</sup>

This conclusion is surprising for two reasons, the first being the fact that it flatly contradicts all the evidence of her autobiography regarding the limited quantity of selfless American goodwill, and the second being its renunciation of the idea of karma, or “soul debt,” as Hayslip calls it. Soul debt is the cyclical nature of action and its reward or punishment for *both* individuals and nations; in reference to nations, she says of Viet Nam and the Soviet Union, “The laws of karma dictate that something good must be in store for both nations”;<sup>45</sup> of the United States and Iraq, she says, “A bloody and tragic—but blessedly short—American-led war was fought in Iraq, paying off and creating soul debt all its own.”<sup>46</sup> Soul debt is central to Hayslip’s vision of her own life, as a justification for the suffering she has endured and seen, and as a philosophical system that allows for the possibility of compensation.

The idea of soul debt, for Hayslip, offers one systematic—or representative, in both senses of the word—way to comprehend the vast brutality of the war and its effects upon individuals; it is one “weapon of the weak” that takes a dominant spiritual philosophy and imbues it with a populist sense of justice.<sup>47</sup> As it is expressed in Hayslip’s work, soul debt takes Buddhist karma and makes of it a folk spiritual method for explaining history as cyclical, but it allows for the possibility of human intervention to correct what would otherwise be an unending cycle of crime and punishment. On Hayslip’s scales of justice, however, her own benefits from the United States hardly outweigh the collective crimes committed by the United States in Viet Nam; from another perspective, the damage mutually inflicted by the United States and Viet Nam is hardly equal. Thus Hayslip’s conclusion that “what [the United States] wants more than anything, I think, is to forgive you and be forgiven by you in return,” implies a symmetry of power that did not and does not exist.

In addition, while individuals can intervene “to break the chain of vengeance forever,”<sup>48</sup> this does not, except possibly in a populist extension,

encompass the radical idea of a *collective*, national “soul debt” outlined above. In the end, we have an inconsistent application by Hayslip of her own belief system. At the particular moment in her life described in the book, Hayslip needs the assistance of U.S. veterans and concerned civilians to help her humanitarian work in Viet Nam. To engage in a tallying of spiritual sins and debts, especially on a collective level, would be detrimental to the practical effort of healing and reconstruction. In erasing the system of soul debt, the resolution of her life story sounds a jarring if not totally surprising note as it attempts to harmonize a world already shown as discordant. This harmonization is extracted from the victim’s body, as used both in its deployment in American discourse and in Hayslip’s appropriation of that body. In her appropriation, it is she herself, in the body of the emblematic victim, who forgives. In the next section, we will see how the underlying logic of the emblematic victim—whose power lies in the naturalization of her body—becomes extended even further in the body of the ideal Vietnamese woman.

### **Chaste Heroines: Reconciling the Roles of Vietnamese Women**

The next stage of Hayslip’s reconciliation depends on her recasting herself as the ideal woman of a precapitalist organization of gender and social relations in Viet Nam, a recasting that will be predicated upon a revision of traditional social norms born from village life and peasant society, not on a Western-style feminism.<sup>49</sup> The macrological dimension of representation is completely jettisoned at the end of the second volume of her autobiography in favor of an idealized notion of femininity that makes it possible for *both* other Vietnamese and Oliver Stone to re-create a symmetrical wholeness at the moment of imperialist violation. As we have seen, Hayslip’s body is the site upon which the most direct crime born of an intersecting technology and masculinity—her rape—is inflicted, and upon which her racial and gender difference from army troops and lovers is most obviously inscribed. Yet this same body, produced in the socioeconomic and cultural location of the peasant village, will provide her with the resources needed to fulfill the mode of reconciliation. When Hayslip eventually carries out “her father’s business” of learning and teaching the value of life and peace, she does this

from a position that Mohanty characterizes as “writing/speaking of a multiple consciousness, one located at the juncture of contests over the meanings of racism, colonialism, sexualities and class, [which] is thus a crucial context for delineating third world women’s engagement with feminism.”<sup>50</sup> It is also from this position of multiple consciousness that we must view her texts because Hayslip’s version of feminism accepts many Vietnamese traditional ideas that might be rejected by western/ized feminists.<sup>51</sup> One of these ideas is the role of women in Vietnamese traditional culture.

The ideal Vietnamese woman’s role is in the private side of the public/private distinction that characterizes Vietnamese culture; as the guardians of the private sphere, women are the “ministers of the interior” who maintain family and national culture.<sup>52</sup> This role is, however, inseparable from the body itself; while Butler argues that heterosexual desire and practice stem from a disciplined continuity between sex and gender, what we see in Hayslip’s work is that, in Vietnamese society, a woman’s social role is indistinguishable from her sexed and gendered body. This is evident immediately, when, after the moment of foreign intrusion that begins *Heaven and Earth*, the book provides a lovingly described ethnography of unspoiled village life and customs, in which labor, family, gender, and tradition are united:

Transplanting the rice stalks from their “nursery” to the field was primarily women’s work. . . . that sensual contact between hands and feet, the baby rice, and the wet, receptive earth, is one of the things that preserved and heightened our connection with the land.<sup>53</sup>

That the nurturing of rice, the major source of nourishment for the peasants, is undertaken by women is a significant extension of their traditional roles in Vietnamese society as “caregivers.”<sup>54</sup> Their roles in the literal reproduction of the means of production (their children) and in the production of food join them with the feminine figure of “Mother Earth,” a Vietnamese mythical construction juxtaposed with “Mr. Sky.” Thus, at the very beginning of Hayslip’s autobiography, she creates a feminine wholeness—of peasant, land, rice, and seasonal cycle—as one side of a balanced heterosexual division of society and nature. This heterosexual division is premised upon the idea that



men's and women's bodies are distinct and serve different purposes, and it also works to reinforce that distinction, continually (re)creating the body.

The appearance of foreigners, first Moroccans and later Americans, contingently erases the distinction between Vietnamese men and women, rendering them as unified in the face of the intruders. The wholeness and "naturalness" of Vietnamese peasant culture is emphasized by contrast with the technologically induced unnaturalness of the Americans. Hayslip later describes a Viet Cong tactic with American prisoners: "Because the Viet Cong, when they captured them, always removed the Americans' boots (making escape too painful for their soft, citified feet), we thought we could immobilize the Americans by stealing their sunglasses and their shoes. How can a soldier fight, we reasoned, if he's not only blind but lame?"<sup>55</sup> The debilitating nature of American technology—its breeding of dependency and its status as external, removable trappings that are nevertheless necessary to the American body—is again highlighted by contrasting it with the body of Hayslip's mother: "I copied my mother's stance in the muddy water, planting my feet like a woman warrior. Her strong back swiveled easily at the hips. Her arms churned like a tireless machine."<sup>56</sup> Significantly, the person that Hayslip illustrates is both machine and body, warrior and nurturer, masculine and feminine, all unified: but whereas Jeffords's body and technology could only be joined through destruction, peasant and land are already unified through creation. This mode of agricultural production at the heart of peasant economy is joined with the production of the social: "When I was old enough to help, I spent every day in the rice fields with my mother. While we worked, she taught me everything I had to know about life."<sup>57</sup> The type of village life that Hayslip describes is "organic" and rooted in hundreds of years of tradition. Yet its "naturalness" is also a fiction. An agrarian economy is still a mode of production that depends on certain technology: the plow, the scythe, the fishnet, the hoe. They are not "nature," even though in a precapitalist economy they may seem natural and unalienated from the human body. It is the effect of naturalness that Hayslip exploits to make her own body seem a part of the nature that Americans will violate.

Both Stone's film and Hayslip's original text of *Heaven and Earth* con-

struct a near mythic past “before the Americans came,” on which a vision of the postwar future can be constructed. While Stone appeals to an orientalist conflation of nation and woman, Hayslip ironically turns to a conflation of nation and woman that is central to the political and literary discourse of Viet Nam. For all levels of Vietnamese society, “chastity” was the prime virtue for a woman: “It was a general term for different forms of purity she was to possess in different periods of her life,” that is, in her relations with her father, husband, and son (the defining men to whom a woman owed the “three submissions”).<sup>58</sup> Chastity in this conventional definition is clearly a social virtue dependent upon the actions of the female body; though it can be a “general term,” it is still premised upon the idea of sexual purity and faithfulness. It can be physically tested. In contrast, the prime virtue for Vietnamese men is “honor,” something much less tangible. Therefore, even though Vietnamese social roles for men and women, especially for peasants, may be rigidly tied to a binaristic heterosexual division of society based upon the differentiated body, it is only women whose social practice is defined by sexual behavior and the telltale evidence of their body.

In Vietnamese culture, the idea of female chastity becomes both a personal and a symbolically national value in its rearticulation through another version of the victim’s body. This is expressed most memorably and complexly in Nguyen Du’s early-nineteenth-century poem *Truyen Kieu* (The tale of Kieu), which tells the story of a young woman, Kieu, who gives up her lover and agrees to a marriage of convenience to save her father. The marriage of convenience turns out to be a ploy to buy Kieu for a brothel. Kieu eventually escapes, but embarks on a difficult life in which she becomes the lover of three different men before she finally finds a way to return to her family and lover. She is reunited with him platonically, which allows her to fulfill her obligations to him while paying penance for her loss of virtue. In this way, Kieu fulfills her duties to her father, lover, and society by sacrificing virtue in the name of filial duty, and then sacrificing physical love for ideal love. “All marveled at her wish and lauded her— / a woman of high mind, not some coquette / who’d with her favors skip from man to man.”<sup>59</sup> In the end, despite all her travails, Kieu is seen as keeping the most important aspect of her chastity—the spiritual one of submissive duty.

*The Tale of Kieu* became the classic of Vietnamese literature because it presented a sophisticated interpretation of chastity that took into account the contingency of circumstance, and also because Kieu's plight was read as a political allegory for Viet Nam itself. The poem is not only a literary classic, but a popular classic that is transmitted orally as well. It has survived in the diaspora partially because of its ability to symbolize the nation's purity through the notion of feminine chastity—that is, through the idealized woman's body. The poem's translator, Huynh Sanh Thong, writes that

to the extent that the poem implies something at the very core of Vietnamese experience, it addresses [the Vietnamese] intimately as victims, as refugees, as survivors. . . . Beyond its literal meaning, Kieu's prostitution is interpreted as a metaphor for the betrayal of principle under duress, the submission to force of circumstances. More generally, Kieu stands for Vietnam itself.<sup>60</sup>

Hayslip's own story, that of a young girl who prostitutes herself to save her family and becomes the wife of numerous men out of necessity, eventually rejecting sex in favor of a spiritual relationship, is a partial reflection of Kieu's story. These lines from *The Tale of Kieu* could easily apply to Hayslip's story: "She wandered from one sorrow to the next / what would be left of her, at journey's end? / For fifteen years, how often she held up / a mirror where all women see themselves! / None could have dropped to lower depths. But dawn / succeeds the dark—who knows the wheels of fate?"<sup>61</sup> Hayslip also ends her autobiographical volumes with her disavowal of the possibility of further romantic relationships with men in favor of devoting her life to the spiritual and physical healing of others, while, as noted above, rejecting a systematic notion of fate or karma. The renunciation and reconciliation together are meant to demonstrate her virtuous fulfillment of the traditional woman's three roles of daughter, wife, and mother. However, this renunciation and reconciliation signal a further dimension in Hayslip's story: the recognition of the female body's role in late capitalism.

For Vietnamese women, the public/private, masculine/feminine power-sharing strategy that characterizes traditional Viet Nam is in actuality a method of stripping them of most of their power while providing an illusion of matriarchal significance.<sup>62</sup> While Hayslip learns significant and dif-

ferent lessons from both mother and father, it is her father who will plant within her the seed of her future philosophy, to be nurtured by the cultural and spiritual heritage she receives from Viet Nam: "Your job," he tells her, "is to stay alive — to keep an eye on things and keep the village safe. To find a husband and have babies and tell the story of what you've seen to your children and to anyone else who'll listen. Most of all, it is to live in peace and tend the shrine of our ancestors. Do these things well, Bay Ly, and you will be worth more than any soldier who ever took up a sword."<sup>63</sup> In retrospect, these words will provide the driving impulse behind her life, to be reconfigured later, in *Child of War*, as "her father's business" to which she must tend; in short, she portrays herself as the dutiful daughter, following the patriarch's instructions to fulfill her duty in the private, domestic sphere, figured as her appropriate arena of power.

Yet, "her father's business," at the beginning and end of her life story, frames another kind of business in which she becomes involved in trying to fulfill her duties as wife and mother: that, of course, is the business of survival in late-capitalist American society. As a wife, her relations with Dennis (as later with her lovers) are strained by entrepreneurial dealings. Dennis, for example, has no objections to her working on an electronics assembly line for National Semiconductor, but he does vehemently object to, and even sabotages, her independent business venture.<sup>64</sup> It is only after his death that Hayslip becomes successful and actually financially independent, owning three houses and a share of a restaurant; however, work re-creates the worker as much as it creates commodities, and in Hayslip's case, the effect upon her is to make her "a harried 'capitalist,' [who] had lost [her] touch as a mother."<sup>65</sup> The return to the role of a daughter fulfilling a father's metaphoric business and her rejection of heterosexual relations (relations that Michel Foucault argues are a necessary development of capitalism)<sup>66</sup> thus constitute a rejection of the late-capitalist society she has known in the United States and an attempt to recover the wholeness and naturalness she believes is found in the Vietnamese family, in the Vietnamese village, and in the ideal Vietnamese woman's body. It is not, however, a rejection that grapples with the changing nature of late capitalism and its problematizing of the body through discursive, semiotic, structural, and systematic means. Instead, it is rejection through a nostalgic retreat to a culture that is part of

an outdated mode of production. This is not to say that resistance to capitalism necessarily has to grapple with its discursive, semiotic, structural, and cybernetic means as they are defined in the developed nations; resistance obviously can and must be undertaken in peripheral economies as well, and the character of that resistance will differ according to those economies' own specific conditions. However, in Hayslip's case, her work is written in a late-capitalist economy and addressed to an audience in that economy. She is no longer "subaltern" in any sense of the word but very much a part of the "First World."

It is in this role as daughter that Hayslip's story alludes not only to the virtue of chastity, but also to the classical Vietnamese poem that revised the definition of chastity. While it is debatable whether the allusion is deliberate, it is inconsequential to the larger issue. This is the scope of *The Tale of Kieu* itself, which is broad enough to accommodate Hayslip's experience. The realm of experience that *The Tale of Kieu* describes, in which ideal duty must be compromised in the face of contingency and thence be rearticulated as a folk ideal that can accommodate contradictions, is also the realm of experience for Hayslip and other peasant women. In short, this is an ideal that finds its realization specifically in the bodies of women. When Nguyen Du first published his poem, the literary and political elite objected to it because "the reality [depicted in his poem] did not fit comfortably with the picture of social order and morality advocated by the ruling classes."<sup>67</sup>

At the same time, the work was a popular success because it did speak to the people about the disjunction between ideal and practice that constituted their lives—that their bodies might conform to the ideal in spirit, if not in fact, because of the circumstances of their lives (hence, Kieu's retainment of her spiritual chastity, if not her physical chastity, is an erasure of the various sexual transgressions she has committed and a rewriting of her body as pure). The parallels between Hayslip's story and Kieu's story are there because the same disjunction between ideal and practice for women that existed in Nguyen Du's time continues today; the story of Kieu becomes both a symbol of traditional Vietnamese culture before French and American intervention and a symbol of the process of culture and the fact that culture often consists of ideals and (contradictory) practice.<sup>68</sup> Equally important, Kieu's body is tes-

timony to the fact that the ideal (of chastity) is already violated; that violation constitutes the ideal that serves as the metaphor for the nation; and that, as a consequence, the naturalness of the ideal body does not exist before its entry into the discourse of Vietnamese culture, but is actually reconstituted after and through the fact of this violation. Hayslip can therefore deploy this body in both its idealized natural state and its violated, victimized state, intervening in both American and Vietnamese discourse over the war.

## Conclusion

Hayslip's retreat to reconciliation serves one function for global capitalism and for the interests of Americans after the war; it serves yet another function for her Vietnamese readers in the diaspora who articulate their dislocation and recuperation in gendered terms. Yet both functions are dependent upon two sides of the same woman: one aspect being the woman aware of the requirements of a modernizing Viet Nam as needy for capitalism as capitalism is for it; the other aspect, that of a woman still bound by the demands of a traditional culture that is itself fractured by the political legacy of the war into a diasporic culture suspicious of any rapprochement with a communist Viet Nam and a homeland culture in which poverty makes maintaining idealism a harder task than usual.

This reconciliatory effort is in tension with Hayslip's need to represent accurately her location in global capitalism and Vietnamese culture. Like the peasant girls who become factory workers in Aihwa Ong's account of Malaysian industrialization, who are caught in the irreconcilable contradiction of modernization and tradition, Hayslip must turn to the premodern past, to the "spirit of resistance" found in *The Tale of Kieu*.<sup>69</sup> In Malaysia, the spirits spoke through the seemingly possessed bodies of young peasant women as a protest against the exploitation of their bodies and labor in the factories; in a similar fashion, through the figure of her own body and its travails, Hayslip addresses her American and Vietnamese audiences. She represents the connection between American military violence overseas, deployed in the name of capitalism or democracy, and domestic violence and female labor exploitation at home through an emphasis on their common gendered and sexualized nature. At the same time, she contains the

damage that is inflicted on her through this violence and exploitation by rearticulating it through the traditional gender roles of a diasporic Vietnamese culture.

Hayslip reveals the connections between certain binaries that seem to be unrelated—Viet Nam and the United States, healing technology and violent technology, domestic abuse and military warfare, the violation of women and the invasion of nations—and she also constructs another binary between the whole past of an untouched Viet Nam and the always violated present, which can be healed by another return to wholeness. We can see, then, how her work is both politically powerful and politically compromised in its very attempt to arrive at a sense of completion: a completion across boundaries and a completion found in a return to a future modeled upon the past. Hers is a conflicted text, a text at once progressive, in its attempt to understand the intimate connections of the histories of Viet Nam and the United States despite the artificial boundaries of culture and nation, and regressive, in its attempt to construct a narrative that imposes a different conclusion—with a sense of wholeness, of closure, of harmony with the past—from that which the story itself warrants. To make sense of this ambivalence in her autobiographical account, I found myself unwittingly following Joan W. Scott's injunction that we examine the "historical processes" and discourses that "position subjects and produce their experiences. . . . Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation . . . but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced."<sup>70</sup> We have never lacked the valuable stories, the recorded experiences, of witnesses to conflicts and atrocities, but we should not read them naively, taking them as unproblematically authoritative or transparently truthful. We need to read these stories—Hayslip's being an exemplary one—beyond their own self-positioning and their re-positioning by others: in Hayslip's case, these respective positions are found in the bodies of the ideal woman (as already violated and victimized) and the emblematic victim. The body is a crucial site of analysis and resistance in late capitalism; yet, Lowe reminds us that

we cannot fall back on the body as an individual identity, subjectivity, private self, or any other autonomous, stable, unitary entity. Such conceptual-

izations might have been useful under industrial capitalism, because they presupposed the structural oppositions between public and private, work and leisure, production and social reproduction, individual and society. But the older, more stable context no longer exists in late capitalism.<sup>71</sup>

It is therefore in this destabilized context that Hayslip's portrayal of the victim's body needs to be examined in its function as a microrepresentation, the means of a reconciliation with Vietnamese tradition and American self-absolution—in short, as a part of the discursive nature of capitalism. The limitations of reconciliation demonstrate that there is a need for readers to help complete the sometimes incomplete mapping of the world initiated by accounts like Hayslip's. Yet, despite its ambivalence and contradictions, Hayslip's story is a crucial act of witnessing and writing. By engaging in a dialogue with the story and articulating the history in which it is embedded, our reading can be politically important in helping us map the world and our position in it.

## Notes

This essay has benefited greatly from a number of people: Sau-ling C. Wong and David Lloyd both gave valuable comments on early drafts, while Abdul JanMohamed, Josh Kun, and Rhacel Parrenas read and commented helpfully on later drafts. My conversations with Kenneth Mostern have clarified many things, including the more difficult points of this essay. Khanh Ho provided me with manuscripts of interviews he and Vinh Luong conducted with Le Ly Hayslip, and Hayslip herself was kind enough to talk to me. My thanks go to all of them for their support.

- 1 Le Ly Hayslip with James Hayslip, *Child of War, Woman of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1993); and Le Ly Hayslip with Jay Wurts, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (New York: Doubleday, 1989). In Oliver Stone's film version of Hayslip's books (*Heaven and Earth* [1994]) we can see this deployment of the victim's role as an absolver of guilt. As one prescient reviewer wrote after the publication of Hayslip's first book, "Ms. Hayslip never slides into bitterness, although she has good cause. She never chooses sides or places blame . . . she manages so gracefully to transcend politics, keeping her humaneness as the focus. . . . If Hollywood has the courage to turn this book into a movie, then we Americans might finally have a chance to come to terms with the tragedy in Vietnam" (David K. Shipler, "A Child's Tour of Duty," review of *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, by Le Ly Hayslip, *New York Times Book Review*, 25 June 1990, 1, 37). I will continue to refer to Stone's work, which is exemplary of the American reception of Hayslip's work.



- 2 Here, the audience is classified ethnically because the major distinction in reactions toward Hayslip's work is the division along Vietnamese American and American lines. Since reviews have also generally been written by men, a distinct gender bias is also displayed, with American reviewers generally favoring *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* for its dramatic wartime setting, and dismissing *Child of War, Woman of Peace* for its domestic melodramatic qualities (see Kenneth Berger, review of *Child of War, Woman of Peace*, by Le Ly Hayslip, *Library Journal* [January 1993]: 128).
- 3 Trinh T. Minh-ha, "All-Owning Spectatorship," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 13, nos. 1–2 (1991), reprinted in Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 81–105.
- 4 Regarding the possibilities of speech and its filters, both of Hayslip's books are cowritten, with some controversy over the extent of the cowriter's control over language and content. In this way, Hayslip shares a problem that all American minority collaborative autobiography has faced: as Paul John Eakins has put it, "the balance of power is distinctly lopsided" between the "informant" and the white cowriter (Eakins, "Introduction," in *American Autobiography: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. Paul John Eakins [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991], 8). It is the work of future scholars to determine what effect cowriting has had on the final shape of Hayslip's books; it would hardly be surprising if that work traces ideologically crucial contributions to her coauthors, considering the history of cowritten narratives in general. (On complications with Vietnamese American narratives see Monique Thuy-Dung Truong, "The Emergence of Voices: Vietnamese American Literature, 1975–1990," *Amerasia Journal* 19, no. 3 [1993]: 27–50).
- 5 Seymour Hersh, *My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).
- 6 For cognitive mapping see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991). It should be made clear that the lack of national resolution is an American problem, inasmuch as the war was a unique disaster for them. As John Carlos Rowe has said, "[the Viet Nam War] is the most chronicled, documented, reported, filmed, taped, and—in all likelihood—narrated war in history, and for those very reasons, it would seem, the least subject to understanding or to any American consensus" (Rowe, "'Bringing It All Back Home': American Recyclings of the Vietnam War," in *The Violence of Representation*, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse [London and New York: Routledge, 1989], 197). Although the war was immensely damaging for the Vietnamese on all sides, it did not constitute the same lasting crisis in self-identity as it did for Americans, who were absorbed in their own myth of themselves as benevolent protectors of democracy. In contrast, resolution for the Vietnamese primarily means the reconstruction of a damaged economy. Overseas Vietnamese arguably constitute a different case; those who see themselves as a politically exiled, militarily defeated nation have their own postwar malaise that rivals, even excels, America's "Viet Nam syndrome."

- 7 Neil Jamieson, *Understanding Vietnam* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), x.
- 8 Timothy Lomperis, *"Reading the Wind": The Literature of the Vietnam War* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1987), 111.
- 9 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 266–267.
- 10 Thomas A. DuBois, "Constructions Construed: The Representation of Southeast Asian Refugees in Academic, Popular, and Adolescent Discourse," *Amerasia Journal* 19, no. 3 (1993): 4.
- 11 This argument about First World intellectual absolution comes from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 66–111. Spivak argues that "the banality of leftist intellectuals' lists of self-knowing, politically canny subjects stands revealed. Representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent" (70). By "politically canny subjects," she means selected representative speakers, and by "transparency," she means the First World intellectuals' disavowal of their own material or visible implication in the global capitalism that produces both the Third World and the need for these representative speakers.
- 12 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 30. Two sources that supplement Mohanty's argument in different ways are Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Women in the Global Factory* (Boston: South End Press, 1982) and Susan Joekes, *Women in the World Economy: An INSTRAW Study* (New York: Oxford, 1987).
- 13 For Viet Nam, there is undoubtedly going to be a marked improvement in infrastructure, and the entire population, even the poorest peasants, will witness some increase in the standard of living. However, this minimal increase for the majority will be complemented by a maximal increase for a minority; in short, the gap between the rich and the poor will grow much faster than the increase in income for the poor. See James C. Scott, *The Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), for an analysis of this same process in the Malaysian context.
- 14 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989). I use Harvey's work, and later Fredric Jameson's, with the knowledge that both participate in the typical marxist maneuver of rendering race, gender, and anticolonialism as secondary factors in the development of global capitalism and cultural forms such as modernism and post-modernism. I hope this essay will demonstrate the extent to which race and gender are constitutive factors in capitalism, and that imperialism and colonialism, and the revolutions against them, shaped the First World as much as the Third World.
- 15 Ibid., 139.
- 16 Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory* (New York: Verso, 1992), 28.

- 17 Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 183.
- 18 Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman Native Other* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 98.
- 19 Harvey, *Condition of Postmodernity*, 171.
- 20 Viet Nam does not follow the same pattern of development described above; there was no movement from industrial to global capitalism for Viet Nam. Instead, South Viet Nam was a primarily agrarian nation that was rapidly transformed by American intervention into an industrial nation without any actual industry. Its urban centers became artificially inflated economies that owed their existence to American imports, while the rural areas became barely inhabitable war zones. Neil Jamieson (*Understanding Vietnam*) offers one illustration of this artificial inflation: "In 1971, [Viet Nam] exported less than 8 million dollars (US) worth of goods while imports totaled 373 million dollars" (353). In contrast, North Viet Nam's industrial development was forestalled by American bombing and its own diversion of resources into the war effort. Since the war, Viet Nam's economy has been slow in developing because of the American-led embargo and because of Vietnamese economic policy failures.
- 21 John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg argue that "from John Hay. . . to Henry Kissinger, America's imperial ambitions have focused on the exportation of 'life styles,' 'attitudes,' and 'values.' It was not territory that we hoped to conquer in Vietnam, but 'hearts and minds'" (Rowe and Berg, "The Vietnam War and American Memory," in *The Vietnam War and American Culture*, ed. John Carlos Rowe and Rick Berg [New York: Columbia University Press, 1991], 13).
- 22 Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 134.
- 23 Hayslip, *Child of War*, 27–28.
- 24 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 131.
- 25 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 6–37. Kathi Weeks and Donald Lowe both use Butler's insights on the body and performativity while emphasizing other practices: for Weeks, a theory of performativity and the body must take account of labor as a signifying practice; for Lowe, performativity and the body must be situated amidst an array of structural, discursive, semiotic, and systematic processes. See Kathi Weeks, "Subject for a Feminist Standpoint," in *Marxism beyond Marxism*, ed. Saree Makdisi, Cesare Casarino, and Rebecca E. Karl (New York: Routledge, 1996), 89–118; and Donald M. Lowe, *The Body in Late-Capitalist USA* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).
- 26 Philip D. Beidler, *American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), 53.
- 27 Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 8–10.
- 28 Hayslip, *Heaven and Earth*, 15.
- 29 Hayslip, *Child of War*, 94.

- 30 Lowe, *Body in Late-Capitalist USA*, 114, 28, 35.
- 31 Hayslip, *Heaven and Earth*, 68.
- 32 Ibid., 97.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 7.
- 35 Hayslip, *Child of War*, 25.
- 36 Lowe, *Body in Late-Capitalist USA*, 62.
- 37 Hayslip, *Child of War*, 111.
- 38 Ibid., 174.
- 39 Scarry, *Body in Pain*, 49.
- 40 "Literally unspeakable" is not a rhetorical stretch: among the attributes of pain that Scarry (*Body in Pain*) tabulates are pain's totality, its ability to destroy language and to obliterate the contents of consciousness, and its resistance to objectification (52); therefore, pain in its dimension of being experienced is by definition inarticulable for the subject undergoing pain. To talk about pain in language is therefore a contradictory practice, so that even the discussion of pain for political purposes by organizations such as Amnesty International inevitably destroys the experiential reality of that pain (51).
- 41 Scarry, *Body in Pain*, 4.
- 42 Trinh, "All-Owning Spectatorship," 100.
- 43 Hayslip, *Child of War*, 25.
- 44 Ibid., 362.
- 45 Ibid., 302.
- 46 Ibid., 364.
- 47 James C. Scott (*Weapons of the Weak*) argues that "the process by which any system of political or religious beliefs emanating from above is reinterpreted, blended with pre-existing beliefs, penetrated, and transformed is characteristic of any stratified society" (319).
- 48 Hayslip, *Heaven and Earth*, 366.
- 49 The evolution of nationalist feminism in colonized countries has followed a different mode of development from that of dominant (white, middle-class) feminism in the West. The development of feminism in Viet Nam goes hand in hand with the anticolonial struggles against the French. The pressures on Vietnamese nationalism—from the Chinese, the French, the Americans, and cold war isolationism—meant that feminism was often articulated within the needs and demands of nationalism. See Nguyen Thi Dinh, *No Other Road to Take*, trans. Mai Elliot (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Department of Asian Studies, 1976); Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986) 196–212; and David Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920–1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 190–252.
- 50 Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle," 36.
- 51 Her constant reference to her "father's business" is an example of a questionable feminist

ideal. It is debatable whether Hayslip's ideas can even be codified as "feminist," if feminism is defined as being some type of radical break with an existing patriarchal economy and ideology. However, Hayslip is at the very least part of an alternative approach to feminism that differs from a westernizing/modernizing feminism that might be practiced by educated and wealthier men and women. Evidence of greater, or different, resistance to hierarchies of gender and class at the peasant level than in the wealthier strata of Vietnamese society is presented by Marr (*Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*) in his discussion of the impact of Chinese imperialism on Vietnamese values.

- 52 For details on the public/private distinction between husband and wife, with the husband being called the "foreign minister" see Nha-Trang Cong-Huyen-Ton-Nu-Thi, "The Traditional Roles of Women As Reflected in Oral and Written Vietnamese Literature," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973), 43–44; the idea that this split can lead to women maintaining the national culture is drawn from Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question," in *Recasting Women*, ed. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990). Chatterjee shows how Indian modernization was accomplished through a bifurcation of gender roles: men, as representatives of the state to the outside world, were in charge of a desirable economic and technological modernization, while women, seen as the bearers of culture, were in charge of protecting the cultural "essence" from Western taint. For Vietnamese women, the belief that their proper place was in the home was reinforced by the "four virtues" that should characterize their behavior concerning labor, physical appearance, appropriate speech, and proper behavior: "In work, one mastered cooking, sewing, and embroidery, but normally not reading or writing. In physical appearance, one learned to be attractive to one's husband but not enticing to others. In speech, one was self-demeaning and rigidly polite rather than assertive or imaginative. And in behaviour, one was always honest and loyal to one's superiors" (Marr, *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*, 192).
- 53 Hayslip, *Heaven and Earth*, 6–7.
- 54 The term is explained in Sau Ling C. Wong, "Diverted Mothering: Representations of Caregivers of Color in the Age of 'Multiculturalism,'" in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. Grace Chang, Evelyn Nakano-Glenn, and Linda Rennie-Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 55 Hayslip, *Heaven and Earth*, 44.
- 56 Ibid., 11.
- 57 Ibid., 9.
- 58 Nha-Trang, "Traditional Roles of Women," 20.
- 59 Nguyen Du, *The Tale of Kieu*, trans. Huynh Sanh Thong (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983), 3218–3220.
- 60 Huynh Sanh Thong, "Introduction," in Nguyen, *Tale of Kieu*, xl.
- 61 Nguyen, *Tale of Kieu*, 2641–2645.

- 62 Marr (*Vietnamese Tradition on Trial*) notes that family loyalty was sometimes given to the hardworking mother rather than to the father. There are several significant women in the pantheon of Vietnamese national heroes, and women played roles in the National Liberation Front and the North Vietnamese war effort. But the heroization of women often comes as part and parcel of their categorization as caretakers and sacrificers.
- 63 Hayslip, *Heaven and Earth*, 32–33.
- 64 Hayslip, *Child of War*, 152–163.
- 65 Ibid., 251.
- 66 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, *An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
- 67 Nha-Trang, “Traditional Roles of Women,” 141.
- 68 See Homi Bhabha, “DissemiNation,” in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 139–170. Bhabha’s idea that the nation is written from a site of ambivalence between “pedagogical” and “performative” time is useful here. For Bhabha, “the people are the historical ‘objects’ of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority that is based on the pregiven or constituted historical origin in the past; the people are also the ‘subjects’ of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the present through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process” (145). Nation and culture are, in other words, works-in-progress and works-in-process under constant tension.
- 69 Aihwa Ong, *Spirits of Resistance and Capitalist Discipline: Factory Women in Malaysia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).
- 70 Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 401.
- 71 Lowe, *Body in Late-Capitalist USA*, 175.