

## Remembering War, Dreaming Peace: On Cosmopolitanism, Compassion, and Literature

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### I. INTRODUCTION: COSMOPOLITANISM, COMPASSION, AND LITERATURE

All wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory. So it is with what Americans call the “Vietnam War,” and what Vietnamese call the “American War.” The significance of this war for the United States and the way it would be remembered is expressed succinctly in Martin Luther King, Jr.’s prophecy of 1967, in which he said that “if America’s soul becomes totally poisoned, part of the autopsy must read ‘Vietnam’” (Carson 144).<sup>1</sup> From the perspectives of many artists working on the war, the American soul was indeed poisoned, but not fatally. It would be art’s task to perform both the diagnosis and to provide the treatment for the American body politic, wounded and staggered by its failures in Southeast Asia. The fact that this treatment would hardly be a cure is borne out by the current symptoms displayed by the American body politic, its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which are telling indicators of a persistent and ongoing American syndrome, the bellicose urge for violence and domination.

Faced with this syndrome, writers who have remembered the war have explicitly insisted, or have implicitly shown their readers, that some of the tools of the literary trade are the very same habits of the spirit that the American body politic needs to temper its aggressive disposition. These tools and

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habits of the spirit are compassion and cosmopolitanism, without which literature would be dead on the page. Human beings who are neither compassionate nor cosmopolitan would appear like some of the characters and authors of such an uninteresting literature, able to imagine only very circumscribed worlds. Writers fighting the war again in memory have made great use of these tools of compassion and cosmopolitanism, with part of these writers' purpose being to illuminate a path to peace for their readers. This path to peace is an unpaved road whose visibility is dim, whose route is perilous, and whose destination is unknown. Literature's fitful light provides us some guidance along this road, so long as we do not overestimate what literature can do, which is the tendency of writers and literary critics, or underestimate it, which is the tendency of people who do not read literature.

Not surprisingly, King's prophecy provides a place for literature and the arts, for he says that an autopsy of the American soul is not possible unless Americans hear the voices of common Vietnamese people, without which there is "no meaningful solution" (149). Literature is one way of recording, imagining, or transmitting these voices, and literature is one way of preparing audiences to hear the voices of others. In both cases, what is necessary for both the writer and the reader is compassion. But compassion and its related emotions—empathy, sympathy, and pity—are hardly emotions that direct us or shape our narratives with any political or moral certainty.<sup>2</sup> While invoking compassion may allow us as individuals to feel the pain of others, it may also facilitate injustice and inequality by permitting us to do nothing as a society to alleviate that pain (Berlant). For some of compassion's critics, compassion is always inherently conservative, since our evocations of feeling for the other might really only mean a demand for attention to our own capacity for sympathy (Edelman; Suttmeier). From this critical viewpoint, our pity for the other's broken body only reminds us of the wholeness of our own. In this sense, compassion is merely a sign of false consciousness, or even political manipulation as in the slogan from the George H. W. Bush era calling for a "compassionate conservatism," or in the ways that a "community of compassion" that Americans built for themselves after 9/11 became a "patriotic community" for the purposes of waging war, as Daizaburo Yui argues (71).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, when King asks us to hear with compassion the unheard stories told by Vietnamese voices during the war, we could be excused for being wary of his religious calling. Perhaps those other voices might simply be used as choir and chorus for a well-rehearsed American drama telling of how a house divided between black and white—as well as Left and Right—is nevertheless unified when confronted with foreign threats.

Nevertheless, a healthy skepticism shouldn't mean giving up on compassion just yet. While compassion has significant limits in the world of politics and economics, where sympathy and pity amount to small change indeed, it has greater currency in the world of art. Here, empathy and sympathy are compassion's cousins.<sup>4</sup> If sympathy is identifying with someone, then empathy is identifying as someone.<sup>5</sup> While sympathy may compel pity and objectification, it may also breed a sense of shared suffering.<sup>6</sup> This fellow feeling may urge us toward action, an urge that empathy may also compel in its ability to make us identify with an other. This empathetic identification may take place through our relationship to works of art, particularly those in which we find "liberal narratives of compassion." Even here, however, action is not certain, for these narratives—of which the critic Lauren Berlant considers *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to be typical—ask readers to be witnesses to scenes of suffering that may purge readers of the need to take political action, rendering them passive, except for the pleasure of their emotions, in the face of injustice.<sup>7</sup> But compassion is like every technique in an artist's repertoire, or every rhetorical trick up a politician's sleeve. The meanings of these techniques and tricks are not absolute but only evident in use. As Susan Sontag reminds us, "compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers" (101).

Gesturing toward translation means acknowledging that different translators will render compassion and its cousins in varied ways. When it comes to the war in Viet Nam and its literary aftermath, what is noticeable is how differently construed these emotions are by the powerful versus the weak; by the wealthy versus the poor; by men versus women. Even emotions are tainted, or tinged, by our historical and contemporary identities, by our social and economic classes. In what follows, I pursue this idea that our feelings not only have structure, as Raymond Williams argues, but that they have different styles as well.<sup>8</sup> Unifying these differences is the overarching structure and style of feeling that give compassion and its related emotions meaning in the larger world, cosmopolitanism—an endeavor dating back to ancient Greek efforts to create citizens of the world who would strive for conversations and human contact across all kinds of borders. Literature, with its ability to offer other stories besides the ones that justify war, plays a key role in cosmopolitanism's efforts to imagine peace and cope with war's enduring aftermath, its long half-life in memory.<sup>9</sup> Here, in memory, wars remain emotionally radioactive, disfiguring the living well after the cease-fires are signed and the shooting has stopped. Against this disfigurement, and against the state-sponsored machinery of war, cosmopolitanism continues to offer a fragile shelter

where writers and readers together can plot the long struggle to peace.

## II. COSMOPOLITANISM NOW (AND THEN): WHAT A DIFFERENCE RACE MAKES

The American War in Viet Nam's history is retold perhaps most memorably by Hollywood's cinema-industrial complex, which has waged a campaign of virtual shock and awe in a celluloid Viet Nam. But regardless of whether American war stories are cinematic, literary, political, or historical, the dominant tales are melodramas of traumatized white manhood. These melodramas of beset manhood substitute the experience of the white male combat soldier, journalist, or politician for the experiences of the nation and its multitudes. War stories such as these return more than just white American men to center stage; they also reaffirm the dominance of that stage and its productions as an American one, a theatrical bill accepted by American audiences, American critics, and even American studies. But what if we narrated the war from the perspectives of those shadowy figures in the wings and background of an American production? Would the starring role of "America" be cast differently, and would the drama bear the same name? The war's diverse cast was international and multicultural, including American soldiers of color, South Korean soldiers-for-hire, South Vietnamese civilian refugees, Japanese journalists, American women intellectuals, and many more. Their oral histories, novels, films, reportage, and photojournalism are war stories too, together providing vivid evidence for how the war and its aftermath must be read from a cosmopolitan point of view that broaches the boundaries of nation, gender, and race.

But since whiteness has been the screen for American film fantasies, I focus here on some of the other colors of the American spectrum, those imprinted on Asian Americans and Latinos. They have long occupied ambiguous places in American society, seen as they are by other Americans as foreigners and strangers. Not surprisingly, Asian Americans and Latinos have produced war stories that are ambivalent, lashed by conflicting feelings of patriotism and revulsion. In her book *China Men*, Maxine Hong Kingston writes of a pacifist brother who must choose between going to Viet Nam and fleeing the United States. He decides that the "United States was the only country he had ever lived in. He would not be driven out" (283). His is a different kind of war story, not unusual but relatively unknown. Having reluctantly volunteered for the U.S. Navy to avoid the inevitable draft that might turn him into a combat soldier, the brother spends his tour peacefully, watch-

ing bombers go on their missions but never having to push the button that would release a bomb or fire a missile. Kingston makes it clear that the line separating a bureaucrat on a ship, pushing papers and a civilian at home going about her or his everyday activities was thin. She writes that whenever “we ate a candy bar, when we drank grape juice, bought bread (ITT makes Wonder bread), wrapped food in plastic, made a phone call, put money in the bank, cleaned the oven, washed with soap, turned on the electricity, refrigerated food, cooked it, ran a computer, drove a car, rode an airplane, sprayed with insecticide, we were supporting the corporations that made tanks and bombers, napalm, defoliants, and bombs. For the carpet bombing” (284).

In Kingston’s radical vision, the war is a total one, for in a military-industrial complex, where armed might defends capitalist right, the American civilian serves his patriotic purpose through unquestioning consumption. One antidote to the civilian’s complicity is, implicitly, the power of the (anti)war story that Kingston tells about her brother’s passive resistance, which ends this way: he “had survived the Vietnam war. He had not gotten killed, and he had not killed anyone” (304). The brother’s story is unlike the typical war story, whose climaxes involve a soldier’s experience in killing and surviving. The banality of her brother’s experience is Kingston’s subversive point about how not all war stories need involve violent, and masculine, action and climax.<sup>10</sup>

Kingston’s war story is different from the dominant Vietnam War story in other ways too, most noticeably in how she compassionately gestures at the Latino presence in the U.S. Army. Before the war, her brother teaches remedial students, one of whom is Alfredo Campos, a Mexican immigrant who was going to school to “get a job away from the grape fields” (281). Campos volunteers for the war, and in the Republic of Viet Nam all of his buddies are “Latins” (282). He has a Vietnamese girlfriend, who wears a leopard miniskirt in the picture he sends home. Kingston’s brother screens a slideshow for his high school students, Alfredo Campos’s classmates, and I imagine that what they see is Alfredo Campos the tourist and traveler, someone learning what Paul Gilroy calls “vulgar cosmopolitanism” (67). Vulgar cosmopolitanism is worldliness without a passport, an unlicensed sophistication that threatens official representatives of any culture and guards of any border; vulgar cosmopolitanism is one unintended consequence of the U.S. policy of shipping poor soldiers of color to fight overseas wars.

While compassion and empathy for the Vietnamese were not always the outcomes of these soldiers’ time in Viet Nam, a reading of the oral histories and writings of working-class black and Latino soldiers shows that they were

much more likely to feel empathy for the Vietnamese than their working-class white counterparts (Mariscal; Terry). For white soldiers, empathy for the Vietnamese was usually a corollary to an already existing tendency toward an elite cosmopolitanism. The most memorable literary incidents of such compassion among U.S. soldiers are found in high literary forms such as novels, memoirs, and poetry, and even here they are exceptional rather than normal, written by a handful of highly educated war-veteran authors such as Tobias Wolff, Robert Olen Butler, Tim O'Brien, and Yusef Komunyakaa. If elite cosmopolitanism is necessary to cross over the racial difference between whites and Vietnamese, then the racial similarity between poor Americans of color and the Vietnamese was one stimulus for a vulgar cosmopolitanism seeded among the wretched of the earth.<sup>11</sup>

*Aztlán and Vietnam*, George Mariscal's collection of writings by Chicanos who went to war or who protested at home, illustrates this working-class capacity for a vulgar cosmopolitanism.<sup>12</sup> For Mariscal, a "structure of recognition" enables many Chicanas to identify with the Vietnamese, to see in Vietnamese lives a reflection of their own, and to develop a sense of solidarity with the oppressed racial other. This structure of recognition is a mode of empathy and compassion that serves to heighten political consciousness among some Chicanos (39) by providing "a preliminary model for group solidarity with important potential for progressive political agendas" (33). Chicana cosmopolitanism here becomes a kind of chicanery, a tricksterism of the downtrodden, bred through forced traveling and encounters with an other.

But if some of these soldiers of color recognized in the Vietnamese a kinship based on the hard work of surviving poverty and colonization, others did a different kind of dirty work by participating in American atrocities, including the My Lai massacre. By doing so, they engaged in what King called the "brutal solidarity" forged between white and black soldiers during the war in Viet Nam (143), a fraternity whose rituals of initiation involved both warring and whoring. What took place on the battlefields and in the brothels of Viet Nam reminds us that the oppressed of one country can become, with dismaying swiftness, the oppressors in another country. In a telling footnote, Mariscal addresses part of this paradox briefly: he says that perhaps "the Chicano GI's recognition of his own situation in the Vietnamese, rather than leading to a heightened critical awareness, in fact produced exaggerated forms of violence. The possible dynamics of self-hatred inherent in this interpretation are too complex (and unpleasant) for [investigation] here" (311).

But it is precisely this unpleasantness that needs to be investigated. Psy-

choanalytic critics offer some explanations. Lee Edelman in *No Future* argues that compassion for an other can spiral into condemnation of that other, and Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* shows how our narcissistic desire to see the other as someone like us can suddenly force us to do an about-face, giving in to a paranoid fear of the other's threat to us. The discovery that the other may neither be like us nor wish to be like us can compel us to furious violence, "us" being the assumed Western, masculine subject in psychoanalytic theories ranging from Bhabha's postcolonial version to Edelman's queer take. Even without the Lacanian argument, we could turn to Nietzsche's idea of *ressentiment* to explain how the weak can turn savagely on each other, exercising a power otherwise denied to them by the strong. Narcissistic and paranoid, or seething with *ressentiment*, the Chicano soldier and his capacity both to empathize with the Vietnamese and to murder them is hardly surprising, no matter how unsettling.<sup>13</sup>

Neither is it a surprise how the American conduct of the war in general pivoted constantly between sympathy and slaughter, expressed, for example, in the rhetoric of the war, where U.S. policy vacillated between "winning hearts and minds" and establishing "free-fire zones."<sup>14</sup> Compassion turns into murder, and vice versa, because they are faces of the same coin, one flipped every time a soldier encounters danger or the perception of danger. Because of this unpredictable element of chance and randomness, the individual emotions of compassion and empathy cannot stop the momentum of a war machine. In the chiaroscuro of a battlefield, compassion and empathy dwell uneasily in both shadow and light. In shadow, compassion and empathy facilitate the killing by making us traumatized witnesses to mayhem; but in the most generous light, compassion and empathy become, instead, the battlefield's conscientious objectors.

### III. AN ARCHITECTURE OF EMPATHY: COMPASSION IN THE MAKING OF ART

The case of two antiwar novels illustrates how compassion and empathy have more of a fighting chance when wars are fought again in memory. Takeshi Kaiko's *Into a Black Sun* is a semiautobiographical account of a Japanese journalist in Viet Nam during the early years of the American War, and stands as perhaps the greatest novel of the war not usually read by Americans. Ahn Junghyo's *White Badge* tells the story of South Korean soldiers fighting on the American side, their services bought by the U.S. government. But any kind of Asian racial empathy that might exist between Japanese and

South Koreans, on the one hand, and Vietnamese, on the other, does not necessarily lead to peaceful relations. The Japanese were at least partially responsible, during their occupation of Viet Nam in World War II, for a famine that killed an estimated one to two million Vietnamese.<sup>15</sup> Later, during the American War in Viet Nam, South Korean soldiers fashioned a reputation for brutality so widespread that Vietnamese civilians feared them more than they did U.S. soldiers. Yet, in both these novels, the portraits of South Vietnamese civilians and soldiers, who come off poorly in most American accounts, are empathetic. What the novels show is that a useful architecture of empathy is composed, as are all structures and styles of feeling, from many elements: here, a mix of racial and cultural similarity is cemented by political consciousness and reinforced by intellectual and aesthetic cosmopolitanism.

*Into a Black Sun* illustrates the contradictory uses of compassion and empathy vividly. The narrator of the novel feels like a “hyena feasting on carrion” (61), someone who “had eyes only for atrocities” (71). The key moments for the narrator are when he witnesses the two public executions of young men accused of being Viet Cong terrorists. During the first execution, the narrator identifies empathetically with the executed, and is sickened; but during the second execution, the narrator views the killing with cool objectivity. The fluctuation between the two moments of spectatorship is the movement between identifying with the victim or with the victimizer, a move that also characterizes the Japanese public’s relationship to the war in Viet Nam. Scenes of warfare in Viet Nam provoked significant antiwar sentiment by reminding the Japanese public of its own status as victim of U.S. warfare and victimizer of other Asians (Suttmeier). Kaiko’s novel constantly brings up moments of such identification, as the narrator sees how the Vietnamese now were so much like the Japanese of World War II, suffering under U.S. bombardment or enduring postwar starvation. But such compassionate identification may only mask the pleasure one finds in witnessing another’s suffering, or obscure the complicity of everyday Japanese in an economy that supported the American war effort. Kaiko illustrates this problem in an episode in which the narrator’s desire to overcome being a spectator leads him to accompany Vietnamese troops into the jungle, where guerillas ambush them. Here, facing a mortal threat to his life, the narrator discovers that his empathetic connection to the Vietnamese dying around him is inconsequential next to his own desperate desire for self-preservation.

While Kaiko’s novel focuses on the subjective effects of complicity, found in viewing scenes of atrocity, poverty, and desperation that are similar to one’s own past sufferings, *White Badge* deals not only in a narrator’s com-



plicity but also a nation's collusion. Rendering this collusion acidly, the narrator calls U.S. payments to the South Korean government for the use of its troops "blood money," which "fueled the modernization and development of the country. And owing to this contribution, the Republic of Korea, or at least a higher echelon of it, made a gigantic stride into the world market. Lives for sale. National mercenaries" (40).<sup>16</sup> As in *Into a Black Sun*, the narrator constantly sees in the Vietnamese a visual reminder of his own experience during the Korean War: "[I]n these people I saw Korea twenty years ago" (53), he writes, remembering as he does starvation, begging, desperation, and death. Unlike Kaiko's narrator, this narrator not only fluctuates between identifying as victim and victimizer; he is also a killer. His one moment of killing an enemy soldier terrifies him, requiring him to obliterate the enemy soldier with hand grenades, the physical equivalent to the way the narrator cannot identify with the man he is killing (189). Instead, he reserves his identification, in these moments of death, for other Korean soldiers (76). Under pressure of his own possible demise, the narrator, like Kaiko's narrator, rapidly runs out of compassion for the Vietnamese and turns to preserving his own self and those most like him.

The experiences of these Japanese and South Korean narrators show compassion's conservativeness. Our empathy for others finds its inspiration in the way these others mirror our selves and move us in their resemblance; but that movement reaches a limit when the other's survival threatens our own self. This conservatism of compassion is, as Bruce Suttmeier argues, spectatorial. We see the other's suffering from a distance that allows us to do absolutely nothing in the world or on the battlefield. And in doing nothing, we are not only preserving our own self by saving our own lives—we are also preserving our own lifestyle. Compassion thus becomes a sly, affective justification for capitalism. The self-interest of the individual and of the corporation that drives capitalist markets is legitimated at least in part by compassion, which renders capitalist desire more palatable by giving it the mask of altruism. With this mask on, we can afford to be charitable to the same poor who may be disenfranchised or rendered superfluous by the capitalism enabling our pity. Compassion thus allows the disavowal of complicity, both for individuals and nations.<sup>17</sup>

We shouldn't forget, however, that for the Vietnamese during wartime, and even afterward, national interest and self-interest often aren't even hidden behind the rhetoric and practice of compassion. If the narrators of *White Badge* and *Into a Black Sun* have the luxury of clothing their self-interest in garments of empathy, some of the Vietnamese they encounter feel no need to

do the same, so naked and abject is their own suffering. In *White Badge*, a Vietnamese elder who leads a village of refugees forcibly displaced by South Korean soldiers tells the narrator that “[w]e don’t feel a sense of affinity with you”; this refusal of empathy exists because of the Koreans’ foreign status in a country haunted by a thousand years of foreign occupation (91). But regardless of their status as victims, the Vietnamese should not be exempt from the demands of ethical behavior by privileging their own victimization and forgetting their capacity to victimize (Nguyen, “Speak”). The Vietnamese example reminds us that in looking at victims, or in feeling victimized ourselves, we often wrongly construe compassion and empathy as extravagances, luxuries from which the suffering are mistakenly and condescendingly excluded by right of their pain.

Imagined as necessary extravagances, however, compassion and empathy can trim the distance between us and our others in ways that serve ethical, political, and aesthetic purposes not easily dismissed, particularly in the realm of memory and its reworking through art.<sup>18</sup> In both *Into a Black Sun* and *White Badge*, Vietnamese characters are given extensive presence and speak of their lives and histories in ways rare in American literature. In *Into a Black Sun*, for example, the narrator’s Vietnamese translator tells him with bitterness that “no one really seriously sympathizes with us, because if they did they couldn’t bear this country for another day” (151). The translator recognizes the superficiality of the Japanese narrator’s compassion, and how it literally does not move the narrator enough. But paradoxically, it is the Japanese narrator’s sense of compassion that allows him to depict his own inadequacy in regard to an other who speaks back to him.<sup>19</sup>

This other who speaks back shows us that hidden within our compassion is calculation; this other also shows us that our compassion is embedded within the neediness of our psyche and the contradictions of our political economy. Still, despite compassion’s limitations, we can continue to argue that as a style of feeling, compassion inflects the style of art, itself a luxury no less needed. Through these necessary extravagances of compassion and empathy realized in art, the “America” appearing in these works is not the same “America” evident in American cultural work about Viet Nam. One major reason why is that the Vietnamese who appear in these Asian novels and American minority reports are not the same Vietnamese who disappear in American literature. Their appearance demands that our discourse about the war be transformed from an American monologue into a conversation among many equals. Even if this conversation does not stop killing or complicity in wartime, it is measurable in its impact on how we talk about a war during its

aftermath. Kaiko gestures at the importance of such conversation in the biblical verse from Corinthians with which he begins *Into a Black Sun*: “We see now through a mirror / in an obscure manner, / but then face to face. / Now I know in part, but then / I shall know even as I have been known.”<sup>20</sup> The promise of compassion and empathy for an other is thus this glimpse of self-consciousness, an always shadowy knowledge that is necessary before the work of recovering from war and constructing peace can begin.

#### IV. COSMOPOLITANISM AS A STRUCTURE OF FEELING

But does cosmopolitanism make a difference, and does compassion matter, in the world at large? Do cosmopolitanism and compassion have any effect in leading us toward what Immanuel Kant, in his proposal for cosmopolitanism, calls “perpetual peace”? In understanding the possibilities and limits of cosmopolitanism, looking toward the suggestive and elusive comments of Williams about structures of feeling becomes helpful. A structure of feeling is “a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating,” often expressed earliest in art and literature (131–32). The structural dimension of feeling reminds us that emotions such as compassion are produced socially. As a result, feeling is never simply individual, and it is never unique. But since we may take our feelings to be only our own, their structural dimension remains “at the very edge of semantic availability” (134), even though it is the very thing that would connect us to others and make us feel at home with them. The new “semantic figures” of these structures must be reinterpreted by a later generation of critics, who can offer “explanations but now at a reduced tension: the social explanation fully admitted, the intensity of experienced fear and shame now dispersed and generalized” (134).<sup>21</sup> Artists, too, offer these explanations retrospectively, as the case of Clint Eastwood’s film *Letters from Iwo Jima* makes evident, which was able to be made only some sixty years after the end of World War II, when American feelings against the Japanese had subsided enough to find an audience. From the perspectives of artists, critics, and audiences, then, cosmopolitanism is fundamentally important, a structure that allows individual feelings to connect to shared social feelings through a work of art, primarily through the emotional mechanism of compassion.

But cosmopolitanism also has another structural dimension built in with the aesthetic, found in the political, and it is here that much of the controversy around cosmopolitanism, and the usefulness of compassion, is found.

The critics of cosmopolitanism have amassed a powerful set of objections, for even if cosmopolitanism can cultivate within us a greater compassion for others and strangers, many doubt that it can compel us to action in meaningful structural ways beyond the individual because of the following reasons: cosmopolitanism imagines a world citizen, which is impossible without a world state; even if such a world state existed, it would in effect be a totalitarian order since there would be no competing power to check it; cosmopolitanism underestimates the enduring power of nationalism and the nation-state in determining cultural identities, political rights, and economic benefits; cosmopolitanism is an abstraction that cannot compel real love or compassion, which must be rooted in the visceral attachments of people to the local, not the global; cosmopolitans are rootless people with no loyalty, more inclined to love humanity in the abstract than people in the concrete; cosmopolitanism is Western in origin and not easily transposed to non-Western societies, which may in fact be utterly opposed to cosmopolitanism's global ambitions and belief in individual rights and liberties; cosmopolitanism has no philosophy of solidarity, necessary for mobilizing political alliances that could struggle for a cosmopolitan vision of the world; some of the diasporic, mobile, migrant peoples that cosmopolitanism favors are actually committed to the global capitalism that cosmopolitanism disavows; and cosmopolitan literature may do more to enhance the reputations and profits of cosmopolitan writers than to help the poor or exotic populations whose stories populate the literature.<sup>22</sup>

Given the realities of a world dominated by the World Trade Organization, the G8, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, Google, the Hollywood film industry, and so on, most of them led and staffed by fairly cosmopolitan people, the kind of cosmopolitan sensitivities I have been describing here in the act of writing and reading literature seem fairly anemic. The cosmopolitan's sympathy for strangers may do more to pleasure the cosmopolitan than to change the deep structures of inequality that make cosmopolitan travel, conversation, and consumption possible for certain classes of people, including the managerial elites of global political and financial organs. Even the literary and cultural critic Elaine Scarry argues that the ideals of cosmopolitanism can only be meaningful if they are enacted beyond the realm of education, culture, and the aesthetic, in institutions that have political, economic, and legal impact on people's lives. The test for "imaginative consciousness," she writes, is not a "pleasurable feeling of cosmopolitan largesse" but a "concrete willingness to change constitutions and laws"—an absolutely correct argument, and one that follows on Kant's proposal to use a

federation of cooperating nations to ensure peace (105). But Scarry is one of the more generous critics of cosmopolitanism, for, in recognizing its limits, she nevertheless also argues that works of the imagination have a role in expanding human consciousness. Still, she marks those limits very clearly when she says that “the human capacity to injure other people is very great precisely because our capacity to imagine other people is very small” (103). Even with great works of art, in other words, actual social change rarely follows, for the boulder of our selfishness is too heavy to be budged by art’s lever. Art and literature, as representatives of peace, simply do not have enough power to transform the world, or so the antic cosmopolitan argument goes, stating, essentially, that cosmopolitanism is too much about individual feeling and not enough about social structure.

These serious and valid criticisms indicate the weaknesses and limits of cosmopolitanism, but they do not invalidate cosmopolitanism altogether, unless we insist on some diametrical opposition between “abstract” cosmopolitanism and something like “concrete” patriotism or nationalism. As the debate around Martha Nussbaum’s polemic on behalf of cosmopolitanism in her essay “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” suggests, patriotism and cosmopolitanism are like other seemingly diametrical opposites, deeply dependent on each other despite their evident antagonism.<sup>23</sup> Without love of one’s own country, one cannot love the countries of others; and without the love of humanity, the love for one’s own kind appears shriveled. But since the love of humanity seems to be in much shorter supply than the love we feel for our own kind, cosmopolitanism has the advantage of urgency and priority as we look for ways to cultivate peace. Without cosmopolitanism’s demand to empathize with others who are not like us—to see oneself as another, and the other as oneself—we are left with a dangerously circumscribed empathy, which does have a political use and a structural impact. This is evident in President Jimmy Carter’s assertion that the war in Viet Nam enacted “mutual destruction” on both countries. Mutual here implies equal, an equation that we can accept only if we ignore the vastly unequal damage inflicted on the people, landscapes, and economies of the United States and Viet Nam, not to mention Cambodia and Laos.<sup>24</sup> Demanding equal empathy for American pain and restricting American empathy for Vietnamese suffering, Carter avoided delivering to Viet Nam the aid it needed—and was promised by the U.S. government in the Paris Peace Accords of 1973—to recover from war. This equation of mutual destruction shows how compassion and empathy can be used in art and politics to render us all equally human in ways that ignore how we are not equal in terms of our capacity to inflict suffering on others. If

compassion and empathy circumscribed by nationalism can have a political and economic impact, then why can't compassion and empathy unleashed by cosmopolitanism have an impact as well?

The answer from cosmopolitanism's critics would be that nationalist empathy has a vehicle for harnessing emotion, namely, the nation-state, while cosmopolitan empathy has no such structure to turn compassion into action. Yet the necessity of grounding cosmopolitanism on the soil of real places, locales, and nations has already taken place in partnership with nationalism. For better or for worse, the version of cosmopolitanism proposed by Kwame Anthony Appiah recognizes the limitations placed on actually existing cosmopolitanism in a troubled world whose politics are often dictated by anti-cosmopolitans. On the one hand, the idealistic aspect of cosmopolitanism values the importance of conversation with strangers, in which conversation is "a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others" (85). On the other hand, he says that "there are limits to cosmopolitan tolerance . . . we will not stop with conversation. Toleration requires a concept of the intolerable" (144). Appiah never mentions exactly how tolerant cosmopolitans will deal with the intolerable, although we might assume that it takes the form of what Gilroy calls an "armored cosmopolitanism" (59–60), one that not only confronts "terror" but also resurrects the imperial mission of benevolent conquest. The quaint idea of the "White Man's burden" in civilizing the world can become retailored for a new age as an armored, neoliberal cosmopolitanism, much better suited for culturally sensitive capitalists in the service of dominating nations like the United States and global entities like the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund.

Although cosmopolitanism's exploitation by nationalism and capitalism may invalidate it for some, perhaps this exploitation is actually a sign of hope, for if the powerful can take up cosmopolitanism, it must mean that cosmopolitanism is useful politically, contrary to what its critics have argued. Without overstating the case for cosmopolitanism, literature, or art, and while acknowledging the necessity of changing laws, policies, and institutions, I find it clear that cosmopolitanism as a feeling is required in order to make changes in structures. Just as warfare needs patriotism, the struggle for peace needs cosmopolitanism to provide the imagination for a utopian future. Without such an imagination and without the expansive deployment of compassion beyond the borders of our own kin, we are resigned to the world we have inherited, one that we are in danger of destroying through self-interested habits of aggression and heedless consumption. Even a theorist as resolutely materialist and revolutionary as Gayatri Spivak argues for the "supplementa-

tion of collective effort by love,” and the “mind-changing one-on-one of responsible contact” (340), both of which are part of the cosmopolitan creed of compassion and conversation. Spivak reconfigures cosmopolitanism’s urge for intimacy, the need to put distant people in touch with one another in the name of revolutionary solidarity. But since the ability to travel and to meet distant others is not available to all, cosmopolitanism makes a difference when it brings us closer in the imagination to distant others. Our structure of feeling in this case is imaginary, but no less potent, for at least in some cases, people may prefer to know each other from a distance than in proximity (and conversely, physical intimacy may only breed contempt, and worse). In this context, Nussbaum’s defense of art’s political and social purpose is convincing, when she says that art, particularly narrative art, facilitates a “cosmopolitan education” that allows us to see others empathetically and to see ourselves from the other’s perspective (6).

This cosmopolitan education works not just in direct encounters with works of art, great and small, and not just in schools, where art is used for pedagogy. In fact, cosmopolitan education works environmentally, seeping into our minds and our emotions through a set of assumptions that our own cultures have created about which other cultures are civilized and human. An average American need never have gone to England or to a university to know Shakespeare’s name and hence to feel, however dimly, a human connection with English culture. Even American tendencies against intellectuals, the elites, and the French would not prevent an average American from feeling that the French have done something worth being saved (or so I hope). In the absence of this cosmopolitan education about certain others that is enacted upon the student (in the classroom) and the citizen (through mass culture), a vacuum is created in the human soul when it comes to those others who are not represented in a given society’s cosmopolitan education. Those who are not represented are more likely, in times of war, to be subjected to a violence whose ferocity is far bloodier than that practiced upon enemies we consider to be more human and capable of cosmopolitanism. Violence can be measured and violence can be tempered, and cosmopolitan education is fundamental to limiting violence upon those we see as closer to us on the human scale, and justifying ever-greater torrents of violence upon those we see as further away on the animal horizon.

We can measure our cosmopolitan sympathies for others, and the degree to which we have been educated about them, via the bomb test. How many bombs are we willing to drop? Where will we drop them, and on whom? What kinds of bombs will we use? Much has been made of how the United

States dropped more bombs on Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos during the American War than were dropped on all of Europe during World War II, and how the total tonnage and indiscriminate bombing of soldiers and civilians alike was a measure of the war's brutality. This brutality would not have been possible if Americans were not already predisposed to consider Southeast Asians as inhuman. Another bomb test is, obviously, the nuclear one. In *The English Patient*, the novelist Michael Ondaatje depicts the atomic bombing of Hiroshima as a racially motivated event, at least from the perspective of one of his characters, the Indian sapper Kip, a colonized subject and a soldier in the British Army, whose hazardous specialty is defusing unexploded bombs. Hearing of the atomic bomb's detonation, Kip has a flash of understanding: the bomb would never have been dropped on a white country. For Kip, the harsh illumination provided by the bomb begins his decolonization through his recognition of the racism in Western civilization that allows Western technology to be used against non-Western people. As a novel, *The English Patient* both depicts what happens when one culture does not recognize another culture as equally human and is, itself, as a novel, an artistic artifact, evidence against the underlying logic of Eurocentric racism, one strand of which is the belief that only whites can write. *The English Patient* is an example to prove Kingston's claim in her *Fifth Book of Peace* that "war causes peace" (227) through producing revulsion on the part of war's witnesses, who lead not only antiwar movements but also write antiwar literature.

Still, writing back against racism, empire, and war, as Ondaatje does, takes place not on the universal scale but on the intimate scale of the individual artist and work. Without these individual artists and works, cosmopolitan education on a universal scale cannot take place. Yet the criticism of cosmopolitanism advanced by Scarry points to the inadequacy of individual works of art and how rare it is to find one that enacts significant change, such as Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. My suspicion is that many people share Scarry's view, although with a less generous spirit than she has, about art. Those suspicious people who do not read literature may be skeptical about whether it has any purpose or use, questions not normally directed toward the law or business or government. But does the average lawyer or businessperson or bureaucrat make more difference, inflict more damage, or do more good than the average writer? The average writer and the average book need to be measured against their equivalents, average people in average jobs, not against daunting standards of making a universal difference or changing the world. Against such high standards, most of us would count as failures, too, not just the average work of art or the average



obscure writer. So let the midlist novelist be compared to the vice president of a regional bank; let Shakespeare be compared to Bill Gates; let the novel be compared to the computer; let cosmopolitan education be compared to war. Only with the appropriate comparisons can we say whether art, and the cosmopolitan impulse to see art as a means to peace, makes a difference. As Kingston also writes in *The Fifth Book of Peace*, “peace has to be supposed, imagined, divined, dreamed” (61); this kind of dreaming will not happen without cosmopolitanism and its persistent, irritating reminder that it is easier to wage war than to fight for peace.

#### V. CONCLUSION: COMPULSORY EMPATHY AND THE ENEMY’S VOICE

Without cosmopolitanism’s call for an unbounded empathy that extends to all of humanity, we are left with nationalism’s compulsory empathy, enacted in its own structures of feeling. For contemporary American audiences, “The Vietnam War” names a structure of feeling that tunes out empathy for the other and helps Americans to forget that “Viet Nam” is the name of a country, not a war. This structure of feeling called “The Vietnam War” is expressed through art most affectively in the Hollywood subgenre called the Vietnam War movie, exemplified in films like *The Deer Hunter*, *Platoon*, and *Apocalypse Now*. These films individually demand empathy for the U.S. soldiers who are the protagonists of their narratives. Collectively, though, the films create a system of compulsory empathy imposed on American audiences as a whole, in two ways. First, audiences are compelled to empathize with the United States since these soldiers and their suffering—both as victims and victimizers—stand in for the emotional, cultural, and psychic devastation wreaked on the United States by the war. Of course, not every American will feel the same degree of empathy toward American experiences, and some Americans will resist empathizing with these films. But compulsory empathy works even more effectively in a second, negative fashion, by providing American audiences few other options for empathy besides the stories featuring Americans. In the absence of stories or news featuring others, the moral imagination of Americans is inevitably stunted, since a compulsory system offers very limited alternatives to the thing that it makes normal. Thus, if one is not straight in a regime of compulsory heterosexuality, one risks being labeled a queer; if one does not feel for American experiences in a system of compulsory empathy, one skirts with charges of betrayal, as was the case in the early years after 9/11. In that climate, it was both outrageous and courageous for the novelist Barbara Kingsolver to publish an article only days after

9/11 in which she both mourned for its victims and reminded her fellow Americans that bombings of that scale were hardly unusual and that Americans were often responsible for them. “Yes, it was the worst thing that’s happened, but only this week,” she wrote. “Surely, the whole world grieves for us right now. And surely it also hopes we might have learned, from the taste of our own blood . . . that no kind of bomb ever built will extinguish hatred.”

Kingsolver’s perspective is possible because she refuses the compulsory empathy of nationalism, remembering the plight of others who have been bombed and seeing the United States from their anguished eyes, in a way that recalls another portion of King’s speech on Viet Nam: “[H]ere is the true meaning and value of compassion and nonviolence, when it helps us to see the enemy’s point of view, to hear his questions, to know his assessment of ourselves. For from his view we may indeed see the basic weaknesses of our own condition, and if we are mature, we may learn and grow and profit from the wisdom of the brothers who are called the opposition” (151). King labels the other not as a stranger or a foreigner, as is the tendency in most versions of cosmopolitanism, but as the enemy, a word that compels us to ponder how we use violence upon the enemy, and the violence with which the enemy threatens us. Turning to the enemy’s perspective is a crucial step in eradicating the sentimentalism and idealism that weakens cosmopolitanism, for such a move reminds us that the other is not likely to see us from a generously compassionate point of view. Indeed, the other—the enemy, the terrorist—is likely to be subject to his or her own version of compulsory empathy. In order to arrive at any hope of a compassionate conversation, cosmopolitanism must therefore negotiate between competing systems of compulsory empathy produced from communities demanding attention to their own grievances. Appiah and Nussbaum underestimate the difficulty of achieving such a conversation by forgetting to remind us how histories of violence and inequity render entry into these conversations so difficult for women, the colonized, and the minority. Shut out from these conversations, these populations may turn to violence in order to speak. Appiah calls such gestures anticosmopolitan intolerance, and so they may be in some cases, but in other cases some may feel that violence is the only tolerable alternative in order to confront unjust power. Understanding that our enemies are motivated not only by hatred but also by compassion and empathy—in other words, by love—allows us to understand the partial and prejudiced nature of our own compulsory emotions.

The recent publication of *Nhật Ký Đặng Thùy Trâm* (the Diary of Dang Thuy Tram) provides me with a concluding example of the complexities in-

volved in hearing the enemy's voice. Dang Thuy Tram was a young North Vietnamese doctor who served in South Viet Nam during the American War and who was killed by U.S. troops in 1970, at the age of twenty-seven. She kept a diary of her two years of service, which was recovered by a U.S. military intelligence officer, Frederick Whitehurst, who kept it for decades before he found the chance to return it to Tram's family in 2005. Her diary was published in Viet Nam later that year and sold some 430,000 copies in a country where the average print run is one to two thousand copies. Critics have attributed the phenomenal success of her diary to the idealistic, romantic, vulnerable personality on display, the readiness of a postwar generation to revisit a war that many young Vietnamese do not remember and do not understand, and the willingness of the government to allow a wider discussion of the war than via the propagandistic terms set in the past.<sup>25</sup> The epic story of the diary's disappearance and reappearance also played a part in the book's marketability and its eventual translation into over a dozen languages, including Japanese (with the title *Tuii no Nikki*). For the English version, Tram's family and the publisher selected the title *Last Night I Dreamed of Peace*, extracted from two occasions in the diary in which she mentions dreaming of peace (27, 111). In the United States, the title of the book has helped to shape its marketing and reception, as a book that offers hope for peace and the reconciliation between enemies. In reading the book, however, what becomes noticeable is not the desire for a reconciliation between enemies—in fact, there is no such desire, only “hatred” as “hot as the summer sun” (114) for the U.S. and South Vietnamese militaries—but for a peace that arises from victory and the defeat of the enemy, whom she calls “bandits” (74), “vicious dogs” (83), and “bloodthirsty devils” (47), and against whom she dreams not of peace but of revenge for all whom they have killed.<sup>26</sup> What is a cosmopolitan to make of this enemy's voice?

While the publisher's framing of the book as a call for “peace” steers the audience's reading in a certain direction—and demonstrates that “peace” can be turned into a commodity as much as war—my suspicion is that the diary's power for American readers comes not so much from the gestures at peace but from the highly recognizable narrative of compulsory empathy offered by Tram of herself. What is memorable about her is the depth of her compassionate feeling for her patients, her comrades, and her fellow Vietnamese. “It's not my love for a certain young man that makes me feel and act the way I do,” she writes. “This is something immense and vibrant within me. My longings extend to many people. . . . What am I? I am a girl with a heart brimming with emotions” (96). The diary is a vivid record of her willingness

to sacrifice youth, romantic love, and even her own life for the revolution, her affections for the “brothers” that she adopts among her comrades (and their more romantic ardor for her), her fear of being misjudged by other revolutionaries, her contempt for the petty politics and jealousies that exist even among members of the Communist Party, and her struggles with what she depicts as her bourgeois inclinations. Her diary makes clear that romantic love and revolutionary love share the same roots, as does compassion for one’s comrades and compassion for the nation. Of a soldier who has just died, she writes that “your heart has stopped so that the heart of the nation can beat forever” (83), while she describes feeling that she and her adopted brothers share “a miraculous love, a love that makes people forget themselves and think only of their dear ones” (86). But in the same entry that describes how she is “profoundly compassionate” toward her wounded comrades, she also mentions “American bandits” (104). The model of emotion she offers is therefore not so different from the very one that Kingsolver criticizes, the deep feeling for one’s own that is shored up by hatred for the other in the service of harnessing individual empathy for the greater cause of patriotic war. As Tram says, “this diary is not only for my private life. It must also record the lives of my people and their innumerable sufferings, these folks of steel from this Southern land” (158).

An American audience’s ability to extract sentiments of peace from Tram’s diary is possible not in spite of the hatred for Americans on display but because of it; ironically, Tram’s patriotic hatred for Americans is understandable to Americans who have patriotically hated others in the present and the past. But it is also the passage of time that makes American audiences willing to reconcile with an enemy from the past, to recognize in the enemy’s sentiments of love and hatred a set of twinned emotions felt by Americans as well. But so far as American audiences are indeed in search of reconciliation with their former Vietnamese enemies, what does “peace” mean? Does it mean simply getting over a war, or recognizing that the struggle to end current and future wars continues? King’s analysis of the war in Viet Nam is again prescient when he connects his present of 1967 to our present, saying:

[T]he war in Vietnam is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this sobering reality . . . we will find ourselves organizing “clergy and laymen concerned” committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala and Peru. They will be concerned about Thailand and Cambodia. They will be concerned about Mozambique and South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without

end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life. (156)

The war in Iraq, of course, constitutes the present from which we look back toward Viet Nam. Thus, in reading Tram's diary in an American context today, the English title—*Last Night I Dreamed of Peace*—might provoke a cosmopolitan feeling on the part of readers, a sense that we should be able to reconcile with our current enemies if we can do so with our former enemies. So it is that the English title of the diary, as inaccurate as it is in foregrounding a relatively insignificant theme in Tram's writing, nevertheless signals a hope for a broader peace than the one Tram imagined.

But the fact that we are still at war forty-one years after King's speech and thirty-eight years after Tram's last words may mean that the compassion called for by King is inadequate; or it may mean that the compassion called for by King, one which inspires nonviolence rather than violence, never truly came into existence. After all, our efforts to speak of the war in Iraq are still inadequate and inarticulate, and at least one major reason why is the paucity of Iraqi stories. Invoking the voices of enemies, others, or strangers is hardly innocent or unproblematic, as numerous critics have shown and any study of the American demand for Vietnamese voices will make evident. Nevertheless, the presence of those voices and the problems they articulate are preferable to their absence and erasure. Complicating the task of attending to those voices is the ongoing work of understanding our place in past and present structures of feeling. For Williams, a structure of feeling in its own present exists "at the very edge of semantic availability," which in retrospect may be seen as part of a "significant (often in fact minority) generation" (134). Looking back to the war in Viet Nam and the stories that have emerged from it, what we witness are a minority of authors using cosmopolitanism and compassion both to challenge American representations of the Vietnamese and to call for a peaceful alternative to the American War. If the call for peace by these authors is oftentimes inarticulate, it is because it is uttered like the same call today, in what Gilroy calls a state of "hopeful despair" (75), an apt description of cosmopolitanism itself. In this fragile structure of feeling that is cosmopolitanism, peace exists, but only on the edge of semantic availability, on the tips of our tongues.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article, I will normally use the word "Viet Nam," which is how the country's name is written by the Vietnamese. When I use "Vietnam" or "the Vietnam War," these words denote the American point of view on Viet Nam. My thanks go to audiences at

Texas Tech University, Ohio State University, Rikkyo University, and Harvard University for questions and comments that helped me to refine my arguments, and to Yuan Shu, Frederick Aldama, Nicholas Donofrio, Adena Springarn, and Lawrence Buell for arranging some of these talks.

<sup>2</sup> Woodward discusses this cluster of emotions as a quartet found in the works of four scholars who have written on compassion: Lynne Henderson, Martha Nussbaum, Elizabeth Spelman, and Lauren Berlant.

<sup>3</sup> In the Bush case, compassion becomes a nickname for the hypocrisy and self-interest of a state that would rather spend emotions than money on behalf of the poor. Critiques of compassionate conservatism are leveled by Woodward and Berlant.

<sup>4</sup> Marjorie Garber has this to say about empathy: it denotes “the power of projecting one’s personality into the object of contemplation and has been a useful technical term in both psychology and aesthetics. It seems possible that the need for this word arose as the strongest sense of *sympathy* began to decline or become merged with *compassion*. But empathy also seems to stress the matter of personal agency and individual emotion. A person who displays empathy is, it appears, to be congratulated for having fine feelings; a person who shows or expresses sympathy has good cultural instincts and training; a person who shows compassion seems motivated, at least in part, by values and precepts, often those learned from religion, philosophy or politics” (24).

<sup>5</sup> These distinctions between sympathy and empathy come from Song (87–90).

<sup>6</sup> Garber, in tracing the etymology of sympathy and empathy, differs from Song when she points to another connotation of sympathy and its complications for our understanding of compassion. While compassion implies inequality, charity, or patronage in the relationship between the nonsufferer and the sufferer, sympathy implies equality or affinity “whether between the body and the soul, between two bodily organs, or, increasingly, between persons with similar feelings, inclinations, and temperaments” (23). The equality or affinity implied by sympathy leads to sympathy’s creation of a sense of fellow feeling and suffering together that is absent in compassion’s establishment of a distance between the witness to suffering and the person who suffers.

<sup>7</sup> This, Woodward argues, is Berlant’s reading of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which Woodward calls the “ur-text” for what she defines as “liberal narratives of compassion.”

<sup>8</sup> Williams’s chapter in *Marxism and Literature* on “Structures of Feeling” is more suggestive than exhaustive. He does gesture briefly at the relation of “differentiated structures of feeling to differentiated classes” but does not explore how different classes may have different feelings. Besides class, the only other form of differentiation to feeling that he discusses is generational.

<sup>9</sup> Concerning storytelling and peace, Gayle Sato argues that “it is the process of narrative reenactment—a process of returning to the same ground to remember and retell it yet articulate it anew each time, a process that creates an incremental and always partial narrative recovery of the past—that contains the possibility of an ethical, community-building practice of pacifism” (114).

<sup>10</sup> Kingston revisits her brother’s experiences in *The Fifth Book of Peace*, a book that mixes fiction and nonfiction as it structurally defers action and climax. While there is much to praise about *The Fifth Book of Peace*, I focus on “The Brother in Vietnam” because I prefer the way it articulates Kingston’s concerns about the systemic nature of war in a much more condensed fashion.

<sup>11</sup> Komunyakaa is the only nonwhite writer in this group. I include him here to emphasize how cosmopolitanism, class, and whiteness are usually aligned among American veteran authors; Komunyakaa is the exceptional African American author who proves the rule that dominant stories of the war are usually told by white men.

<sup>12</sup> Two conventions regarding gender difference within the category of “Chicano” are to use “Chicana/o” or “Chican@.” Following a third convention, I prefer to alternate between Chicanas and Chicanos.

<sup>13</sup> “Seething” is the adjective that Wendy Brown uses in her explanation of how Nietzschean *ressentiment* affects the weak, who are subject to “slave morality.”

<sup>14</sup> The catch-22 of American attitudes is expressed most infamously, but perhaps apocryphally, by the American major who said, “It became necessary to destroy the town in order to save it.” The quotation was reported in February 1968 in the *New York Times* by Peter Arnett, but corroboration of the quotation has apparently been difficult to make.

<sup>15</sup> Havens gives a figure of “at least one million” and briefly notes Vietnamese resentment of Japanese occupation. Karnow gives the figure of two million (144). Elliott mentions the role of the colonial government in forcing peasants to turn over rice for the Japanese Army, which hoarded food supplies during the famine (107).

<sup>16</sup> Suk-Young Hwang’s novel *The Shadow of Arms* reinforces this sense of unacknowledged commerce at the heart of war, in its depiction of South Koreans, South Vietnamese, Vietnamese Communists, and Americans all participating ruthlessly in the black market during the war.

<sup>17</sup> Even in the case of American studies, the power and paradox of compassion is sometimes at work. Compassion is evident in the theoretical work of American studies that argues for the field being more empathetic to the nation’s others, both those within national borders and outside of them (Friedensohn; Kerber; Kessler-Harris; Rowe). But compassionate representation in these multicultural or international guises risks being merely additive, both at the level of institutional practice and at the level of research. Even as we include different faces and different bodies in our structures of feeling and of thinking, those structures themselves, such as the university, the department, or the field, may not change. (See Desmond and Dominguez and Lee for the dangers of an “international” American Studies that is still American centered. The critiques of an additive multiculturalism are numerous, including those of Lowe and Chow). In this sense, compassion is again conservative, preserving an “America” in American studies that is ever more diverse and inclusive, but one whose democratic vistas are nevertheless stamped as American property.

<sup>18</sup> I borrow the dialectic of necessity and extravagance from Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman Warrior* and Sau-ling C. Wong’s critical appropriation of that dialectic to describe the workings of Asian American literature.

<sup>19</sup> The textual strategy here reminds me of Trinh T. Minh-ha’s postcolonial third world feminist approach to the ethics of writing and representation in *Woman Native Other*, one that is also presumably influenced by the history of Viet Nam and the American War: “I write to show myself showing people who show me my own showing. I-You: not one not two” (22).

<sup>20</sup> 1 Corinthians 13.12, from the Revised Challoner-Rheims Version (Confraternity), Guild Press 1941. The King James version, perhaps the best known, is “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

<sup>21</sup> The preceding section of this paragraph on Williams is drawn from Nguyen 2008.

<sup>22</sup> The commentary on cosmopolitanism is extensive. For a few sources, see Appiah, Archibugi, Brennan, Cheah and Robbins, Clifford, Derrida, Douzinas, Gilroy, Hollinger, Kant, Kaplan, Nussbaum, Srikanth, and Vertovec and Cohen.

<sup>23</sup> See the essays in Nussbaum.

<sup>24</sup> For example, some 3,000,000 Vietnamese died during the war, compared to a little more than 58,000 Americans; and some 300,000 Vietnamese remain missing, compared to a little over 2,000 Americans. The United States was never, of course, bombed.

<sup>25</sup> See the essays by Fox, Vo, and Vuong.

<sup>26</sup> The quotations are drawn from the English edition of the diary, although I have cross-checked these translations with the original Vietnamese edition.

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