



The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past

Robin Wagner-Pacifici; Barry Schwartz

The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 97, No. 2 (Sep., 1991), 376-420.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0002-9602%28199109%2997%3A2%3C376%3ATVVMCA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-1>

The American Journal of Sociology is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Commemorating a Difficult Past¹

Robin Wagner-Pacifici
Swarthmore College

Barry Schwartz
University of Georgia

The problem of commemoration is an important aspect of the sociology of culture because it bears on the way society conceives its past. Current approaches to this problem draw on Émile Durkheim and emphasize the way commemorative objects celebrate society's former glories. This article on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial deals with the way society assimilates past events that are less than glorious and whose memory induces controversy instead of consensus. The Vietnam War differed from other wars because it was politically controversial and morally questionable and resulted in defeat; it resembled other wars because it called out in participants the traditional virtues of courage, self-sacrifice, and honor. The task of representing these contrasting aspects of the war in a single monument was framed by the tension between contrasting memorial genres. Focusing on the discursive field out of which the Vietnam Veterans Memorial emerged, this analysis shows how opposing social constituencies articulated the ambivalence attending memories of the Vietnam War. Ambivalence was expressed not only in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's design but also in the design of Vietnam War monuments later erected throughout the United States. These efforts to memorialize a divisive war, along with attempts in other nations to come to terms with the difficulties of their past, call into question Durkheim's belief that moral unity is the ultimate object of commemoration. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and devices like it come into view not as symbols of solidarity but as structures that render more explicit, and more comprehensible, a nation's conflicting conceptions of itself and its past.

¹ We thank Wendy Griswold, Harold Bershady, Gideon Aran, Joy Charlton, T. Kaori Kitao, and Gary Marx for useful comments on earlier versions of this article. Comments by the several anonymous referees also contributed significantly to the authors' understanding and to the article's development. The authors also thank David

Dear son of memory, great heir of Fame,
What's need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
[JOHN MILTON, "On Shakespeare" (1630)]

In this article, we address two problems, one general and one particular, and claim that they are best approached by referring each to the other. The first, general, problem is that of discovering the processes by which culture and cultural meaning are produced. Collective memory, moral and political entrepreneurship, dominant ideologies, and representational genres are all refracted through these processes and must all be sociologically identified and gauged. The second, particular, problem is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. This unusual monument grew out of a delayed realization that some public symbol was needed to recognize the men and women who died in the Vietnam War. But its makers faced a task for which American history furnished no precedent—the task of commemorating a divisive defeat.

By dealing with the problem of commemoration in this case study of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, we can address general concerns in the sociology of culture. Our concentration on the details of a particular case follows Clifford Geertz's maxim that "the essential task of theory building . . . is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them" (1973, p. 26). However, we are also concerned to locate commemorative formulas as they are repeated across cases. Thus we will be moving from the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to monuments that have similarly vexed commemorative missions, seeking to bring together the resemblances and differences under a single analytic framework.

We take up our subject by tracing the social, political, and cultural trajectories of the negotiation process that resulted in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. That process confronted several distinct, but related,

Guynes, whose curatorial assistance enabled them to make use of the holdings of the United States Museum and Archaeological Regional Storage Facility, and Donald A. Leon, a designer of the Korean War Veterans Memorial, whose thoughtful comments on that memorial were most helpful. Earlier versions of this article were presented at the 1987 American Sociological Association annual meeting and the 1989 Colloquium on Modern War Monuments, Institute for Advanced Study, Berlin, Germany. This article was partially prepared while one of the authors was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. For financial support provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, both authors are grateful. Correspondence should be sent to Robin Wagner-Pacifici, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania 19081.

problems: (1) the social problems of fixing painful parts of the past (a military defeat, a generation of unredeemed veterans) in the public consciousness, (2) the political problem of commemorating an event for which there is no national consensus, and (3) the cultural problem of working through and against traditional expectations about the war memorial genre.

DEDICATION

On November 11, 1982, seven years after the last American died in Vietnam, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated. Immediately before the dedication ceremony, 150,000 spectators watched and applauded as 15,000 veterans passed before them. Elaborate floats and flyovers by fighter planes and helicopters embellished the three-hour parade. The more solemn aspects of this colorful Veterans Day had been established by the reading out of the names of all 57,939 Americans killed in Vietnam in an earlier 56-hour candlelight vigil at the National Cathedral. The president of the United States participated in the observance, lighting a candle for the dead and listening to part of the long roster of names.

From the very beginning of these commemorative rites, the themes of recovery and solidarity were repeated. The motto of the Veterans Day parade, "Marching along Together," reflected these themes and prefaced the dedication day invocation: "Let the Memorial begin the healing process and forever stand as a symbol of our national unity." The rhetoric, however, expressed an ideal, not a reality. If official spokesmen defined the Memorial as a way "to unite our beloved America with her bravest and best," the bravest and best were inclined to ask what took so long. As one veteran put it: "They should have had this when we first came back in 1971." Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger conceded the delay, but added, "We have finally come to appreciate your sacrifice." Likewise, President Reagan announced that everyone is now "beginning to appreciate that they were fighting for a just cause," as he contemplated the list of those who died for it (*Washington Post*, November 14, 1982, Sec. A, pp. 1, 18, 20; *New York Times*, November 11, 1982, Sec. A, p. 1).

Many people disagreed with the president's assessment. The dedication ceremony itself began with words of contrition rather than unequivocal appreciation: "We ask for grace to face our past." And at the solemn wreath-laying ceremony—the emotional highpoint of the dedication—a bitter voice arose from the crowd: "What were we fighting for?" (*U.S. News and World Report*, November 22, 1982, p. 66). No one can claim that Americans have reached a unified answer to that question.

DILEMMAS OF COMMEMORATION

The memory of the Vietnam War and its epoch takes place within a culture of commemoration. Current analytic approaches to culture define commemorative objects, and cultural objects in general, as "shared significance embodied in form" (Griswold 1987*a*, p. 13). However, our concern is in formulating an approach to those kinds of commemoration for which significance is not shared.

One of the most influential perspectives on the social functions of commemoration is Émile Durkheim's. Commemorative rites and symbols, Durkheim tells us (1965, p. 420), preserve and celebrate traditional beliefs; they "serve to sustain the vitality of these beliefs, to keep them from being effaced from memory and, in sum, to revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness. Through [commemoration] the group periodically renews the sentiment which it has of itself and of its unity." Associated with Durkheim's conception is a rich research tradition that includes works by Maurice Halbwachs (1941, 1950), Robert Hertz (1965), Lloyd Warner (1959), Bernard Barber (1972), Edward Shils (1981), and David Lowenthal (1985), among others. These works, like Durkheim's, emphasize the way commemorative monuments integrate the glory of society's past into its present concerns and aspirations. They assume that the events or individuals selected for commemoration are necessarily heroic or, at the very least, untainted. In this view, commemoration is governed by a kind of pleasure principle that produces a unified, positive image of the past. But suppose a society is divided over the very event it selects for commemoration. Suppose that event constitutes a painful moment for society, such as a military defeat or an era of domestic oppression.² What kinds of "traditional beliefs" and "essential elements," and what kind of monuments, if any, can crystallize these moments and unify the society around them? How is commemoration without consensus, or without pride, possible?

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial provides a good case to use in thinking about these issues. The succession of events that led to the Memorial's creation and public reception was a culture-producing process. In that process, contrasting moral evaluations of the Vietnam War and its participants were affirmed. The process itself consisted of seven stages, each defined by the activity of different individuals and different institutions: (1) the Pentagon's decision to mark the war by an inconspicuous plaque in Arlington Cemetery; (2) congressional activity culminating in a Vietnam Veterans Week and a series of veterans' support programs; (3) a former Vietnam soldier's conception and promotion of a tangible monu-

² Current efforts in the Soviet Union to memorialize Joseph Stalin's victims provide a recent example of efforts to commemorate the oppression of civilian populations.

ment; (4) intense controversy over the nontraditional monument design selected by the United States Commission of Fine Arts; (5) modification of this original design by the incorporation of traditional symbols; (6) the public's extraordinary and unexpected reaction to the Memorial; and (7) the ongoing controversy over its further modification. Our analysis will pass through these stages as we chart the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's development.

From a comparative perspective, the moral evaluations reflected in the Vietnam Memorial derive from a formula common to all societies that seek to commemorate controversial military ventures. When the cause of a lost war is widely held to be immoral or at best needless, then, in James Mayo's (1988, p. 170) words, "defeat . . . cannot be forgotten and a nation's people must find ways to redeem those who died for their country to make defeat honorable. This can be done by honoring the individuals who fought rather than the country's lost cause." This commemorative formula, as will be shown, has been expressly invoked to justify the marking of the Vietnam War. However, it also justifies the marking of wars that resemble the one fought in Vietnam. When Israeli officials speak in ceremonies occasioned by the Lebanon War, they extol its soldiers in words that are vivid and inspiring. Their remarks on the war itself are vague and pointless. They affirm the war as a historical entity but deny it an elevated place in the national experience. The event is swallowed, as it were, but never assimilated. Such is the memory of "Israel's Vietnam": a misbegotten cause nobly pursued.³ The dualism of cause and participant is similarly dramatized in the American South. Confederate Memorial Day ceremonies throughout the South vary from one place to the next, but one thread unites them all, and that is the determination to honor the gallantry of the Confederate soldier, without mention of secession and slavery. It was this same principle—the separation of the men from their cause—that President Ronald Reagan's supporters invoked to justify his visit to Bitberg to honor Nazi Germany's war dead.⁴ The Soviet Union, after its evacuation of Afghanistan, also faces questions on how to recognize men who fought and lost a war. In an unprecedented gesture of kindness toward its own prisoners of war, the Soviet government not only accorded the benefit of doubt to those whose conduct during imprisonment was uncertain, but also declared that "forgiveness toward POWs who succumbed to enemy pressure [is] a necessary part of the national healing process" (*New York Times*, June

³ Personal communication from Gideon Aran, Department of Sociology, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel.

⁴ A detailed analysis of the Bitburg controversy is contained in Schmitt (1989).

14, 1988).⁵ “National healing”—precisely the need invoked in America to justify the honoring of the Vietnam soldiers. And if the Soviet Union’s willingness to forgive those who abandoned its cause betrays a general doubt about the merit of the cause itself, it is the same kind of doubt that once plagued America.

Commemoration as a Genre Problem

Controversies over the merits of a war are expressed at some point in debates over measures taken to commemorate it. The stages in the Vietnam Memorial’s construction reveal, on the one hand, the desire for a design that reflects the uniqueness of the Vietnam War and, on the other, the desire for a design that recognizes the sense in which the Vietnam War was similar to previous wars. The Vietnam War differed from other wars because it was controversial, morally questionable, and unsuccessful. It resembled other wars because it called forth in its participants the traditional virtues of self-sacrifice, courage, loyalty, and honor. Tension between alternative commemorative designs centers on the problem of incorporating these contrasting features into a single monument.

Distinctions among war monuments are, like all generic distinctions, produced by “sorting, seeing the similarities in different . . . objects, abstracting the common elements from a welter of particular variations” (Griswold 1987a, p. 17). Genre, in Wendy Griswold’s view, is a kind of schema that organizes perception. Griswold asserts, however, that literary and artistic genres are impermanent and express the changing character of their creators, audiences, and contexts. This conception of genre is relevant to our present problem: What kind of monument can be built in the context of changes in traditional beliefs about what war monuments should look like and represent? Since no slate of tradition can be wiped totally clean, however, definite limits to the negotiability of commemorative genres must be assumed. To generalize this assumption, any analysis of a cultural object must chart and interpret its generic limitations. When, for example, is a tragedy no longer a tragedy? When is a war memorial no longer a war memorial? This matter, the negotiability of genre, is germane to our study. Is there some essence of “war memorialness” and can people identify it? Most important, how does this generic essence translate conflicting ideas about the Vietnam War into the monument-making process? How does it contribute to the task of incorporating painful events into the collective memory?

⁵ For a discussion of the common postwar adjustment problems of Vietnam and Afghanistan veterans, see *Atlanta Journal* (October 19, 1988), p. 2A; *New York Times Magazine* (June 11, 1989), p. 60 ff.

We believe a clue to this question lies in the disrupted expectations associated with the design of commemorative monuments. In the case of war memorials, traditional expectations are satisfied by a variety of forms, including memorial buildings, realistic statues of fighting men, obelisks, arches, granite monoliths, and other structures that prominently name the war being commemorated and combine particular physical elements, including vertical preeminence, grandness of size and lightness of color, with national symbolism. If all these traditional memorial forms are rejected in favor of a new one, as was the case in the original design of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, then questions must be raised about what the new form seeks to represent. The topics of such questions include: (1) the nature of the war (declared vs. undeclared; just vs. unjust; victory vs. defeat); (2) the nature of the nation's response to the war (consensus vs. dissensus); (3) the nature of the public's reading of the returned veterans' social status (heroes vs. deviants); (4) the political climate of the times (conservative vs. liberal); and (5) the nature of political action (majoritarian vs. constituency-based interest groups).

METHOD

Attitudes and interests are translated into commemorative forms through enterprise. Before any event can be regarded as worth remembering, and before any class of people can be recognized for having participated in that event, some individual, and eventually some group, must deem both event and participants commemorable and must have the influence to get others to agree. Memorial devices are not self-created; they are conceived and built by those who wish to bring to consciousness the events and people that others are more inclined to forget. To understand memorial making in this way is to understand it as a construction process wherein competing "moral entrepreneurs" seek public arenas and support for their interpretations of the past. These interpretations are embodied in the memorial's symbolic structure.

Efforts to connect cultural objects to a people's social experience rarely attend to this kind of process. Edward Shils and Michael Young's (1953) account of the Coronation, Clifford Geertz's (1973) work on the Balinese cockfight, Lucien Goldmann's (1964) analysis of Racine's plays—these exemplary works, among others, seek to align synchronically the symbolic structure of cultural objects with the mental structures of the society. Without denying the plausibility of these particular investigations, we can recognize two shortcomings in their method. First, the method admits of contestable conclusions because an astute observer can always find something in the society for a given cultural object to reflect. Second,

the method draws attention to what the cultural object is and what it represents but not to how the object came to be what it is and how it came to represent what it does. Analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial made these shortcomings apparent to us. Looking at this Memorial at a given point in time, we could find no way to “decode” it, no way to articulate its relation to society. Only by accounting for its inception and development over time did we come to know how the Memorial’s symbolic structure expresses or emerges from the society’s values and remembrance of the war.

We have therefore designed a study that draws on three distinct, yet compatible, methodological approaches. Together, they will allow us to reproduce and interpret the context in which the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is set. We will develop (1) a “thick description” of a specific case—an ethnography that aims at uncovering the “conceptual structures that inform our subjects’ acts” (Geertz 1973, p. 27), (2) a discourse analysis that is sensitive to the inscriptions of meaning (both verbal and visual) in social contexts, and (3) a comparative methodology that leads to general conclusions.

Our use of the methodology of discourse analysis requires some elaboration. Drawing our analysis through the “discursive surround” of a cultural object, we are systematically attending to the social talk and social gestures that constitute and interpret the object in time and space. Our assumption is that specific worldviews inhere in the specialized discourses of social organizations, which include political, mass media, and military organizations. These worldviews involve ideas of what it is to be a human being in society and how human beings ought to be represented. Discourse analysis moves back and forth between organizations and the contours of their worldviews by attending to the specific words and acts of organizational members. From the most micro-level lexical features (the use of abstract vs. concrete words, for example) to syntactical features (use of active or passive voice) to overarching allegorical figures, a given discourse can be interrogated and its worldview delineated.

This type of analysis works with presumptions of genre consistencies and is thus interested to discover, in the context of a broader project of relating discourse to social setting, genre inconsistencies. In terms of verbal discourse about war memorials, this analysis includes the noting of unexpected combinations (heroism and defeat), repetitions, excess, and absence (words and concepts either appearing overabundantly or not at all). In terms of visual discourse about war memorials, it involves a semiotic process of recognizing the positioning and normative evaluation of dyadic oppositions to which the given culture specifically attends (e.g., high-low, black-white, concrete-abstract).

This methodology involves examination of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as it evolves over time. We perform thick descriptions of the Memorial's interaction with its context and show how this interaction crystallizes the way the Memorial is received and responded to. The addition of a comparative analysis of other difficult commemorative projects allows us to draw thick description into the more general project of formulating the relation between commemoration and its genres.

Theoretical and methodological issues thus feed on one another. Durkheim and his followers formulated notions of commemoration that were applicable to positive events on whose significance all could agree. In contrast, we seek to understand the commemoration of negative events. Negative events, as we define them, do not include injuries and other harm unjustly inflicted by an enemy—as occur in lost causes honorably pursued or cruelty and suffering bravely endured. Negative events are moral traumas: they not only result in loss or failure but also evoke disagreement and inspire censure. But these traumas cannot always be ignored without denying their noble side, without forgetting commitments and sacrifices that would be considered heroic in the service of other ends. It is precisely this tension that our methodology is designed to reveal and that our theory is designed to articulate.

Data collection.—When the realities of a particular social experience, such as the Vietnam War, thrust themselves against previously formed assumptions, individual and institutional discourses must realign their terms or remain incapable of making that war understandable. This adaptation is expressed in every aspect of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's development. Our focus on this development prompted us to examine the discourses of such relevant institutions and individuals as Congress, the Commission of Fine Arts, the mass media, the Memorial's designers and visitors, among others. We found much of this discourse in the *Congressional Record*, dedication speeches, Veterans Day oratory, and commentaries appearing in newspapers and magazines. In addition, many written messages addressed to the dead soldiers are being left at the Memorial by friends and relatives. A sample of 250 of these documents includes statements about the significance of the Memorial itself. A different layer of the Memorial's meaning was the object of observations we made at the site and of similar observations reported by informants. Also, we obtained from the Department of the Interior a partial inventory of objects left at the Memorial since its completion. Typically presented in memory of the dead by family and friends, these objects range from national symbols, like flags, to private possessions, like toys or articles of clothing that once belonged to the deceased. All such tokens are gathered up from the Memorial site by the National Park Service at the end of each day and, along with the written correspondence, are

cataloged and stored at the Museum and Archaeological Regional Storage Facility in Lanham, Maryland, where we inspected them.⁶

No one segment of this material provides much useful information. It takes the total body of material, duly combined and arrayed in proper sequence, to reveal the unfolding of commemorative meaning.

A NATION'S GRATITUDE: SEARCH FOR A GENRE

The first official recognition of the Vietnam veteran was not bestowed until 1978, three years after the last American was flown out of Saigon. The recognition itself was hesitant and uncertain. A Vietnam War crypt had already been prepared in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, but the Army determined that neither of its two unidentified bodies (only 30% of the remains in either case) made for a decent corpse. Instead of honoring its Vietnam battle dead by symbolically joining them, through entombment of unknown soldiers' remains, with men fallen in earlier wars, the army recommended that a plaque and display of medals be set apart behind the tomb, along with the following inscription: "Let all know that the United States of America pays tribute to the members of the Armed Forces who answered their country's call." This strange declaration bears no reference at all to the Vietnam War, and it required an act of the Veterans Affairs subcommittee to make it more specific: "Let all people know that the United States pays tribute to those members of the Armed Forces who served honorably in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam era" (*The Nation*, April 8, 1978, p. 389). In even this second, stronger statement, three things are noteworthy: (1) although revised in Congress, the statement was initiated by the military; (2) it received little publicity; and (3) it designated the conflict in Vietnam by the word "era"

⁶ In November 1986, a staff member of the Museum and Archaeological Regional Storage (MARS) Facility turned over to us, for inspection at the site, photocopies of all written correspondence left at the Memorial wall and collected up to that point. In sampling both genres (letters, poems, memos, greeting cards, business cards, flyers, etc.) and themes (comments on the war, comments on the Memorial, comments on individual soldiers, government officials, family members, etc.), we wanted to avoid redundancy and to collect a representative assortment and number. Of the approximately 350 written items examined, 250 were copied and later analyzed. The National Park Service's publicly circulated inventory of material objects, on the other hand, is complete but limited as to period of coverage. The inventory began in November 1984 (when the Memorial's statue was unveiled) and was sharply cut back in September 1985 for budgetary reasons. The collection and storage of objects, however, continued after September 1985, and these objects are available for inspection at the MARS facility. Finally, our on-site observations consisted of four separate visits to the Veterans Memorial and one visit to the Moving Wall between 1986 and 1989. These contacts, which total about 10 hours, do not include visits to local Vietnam War monuments. During each visit our observations were entirely unstructured.

rather than "war." Thus the recognition came from only a small part of the society for whose interests and values the war was fought; it was communicated to that society without conspicuous ceremony; and it betrayed confusion about the meaning of the war by its failure to find a word to describe it. This last point is the most noteworthy of all. Although a war had not been officially declared, many congressional resolutions during the 1980s referred to the hostilities in Vietnam as "the Vietnam war." Touchiness during the late 1970s about what to call the conflict stemmed from social, not legal, concerns. To name an event is to categorize it morally and to provide an identity for its participants. Anomalous names betray ambiguity about an event's nature and uncertainty about how to react to the men who take part in it.

The first solution to the war's commemorative genre problem was thus halting and uncertain. The fighters were honored but not by an imposing monument. They were honored by a plaque, inconspicuously placed, whose inscription was, itself, indirect and muted. Undeclared wars are usually fought with restraint, however violent they might be. The Vietnam War's first official commemoration mirrored this restraint, marking the cause without really drawing attention to it.

Official ambivalence toward the Vietnam War showed up next in the activities of Congress. It was in Congress, in fall 1978, that the work culminating in the Veterans Memorial began. The plan then discussed, however, was not to commemorate those who had died in the war, but to set aside a special "Vietnam Veterans Week" for its survivors. Thus evolved a second solution to the problem of finding a genre to commemorate the Vietnam War. Time, rather than granite, the dedication of a week rather than the dedication of a tangible monument, sufficed to honor the Vietnam fighting man. This plan's principal entrepreneurs were the members of the Vietnam-Era Caucus, 19 U.S. representatives and senators who had served in the military during the Vietnam War years. They meant to achieve two goals: to unify a nation divided by war and to induce Congress to recognize that many war veterans were suffering from unmet needs. Before anything could actually be accomplished, however, certain obstacles had to be overcome, obstacles inherent in the object of commemoration itself.

To promote unity by separating the event from its men was Congress's first concern. In Congressman Grisham's words, "We may still have differing opinions about our involvement in the Vietnam War, but we are no longer divided in our attitudes toward those who served in Vietnam" (U.S. House of Representatives 1979, p. 12588). At one time, however, the division was deep. Grisham himself acknowledged that the veterans were stigmatized or, at best, ignored on their return from the

battlefront. No ceremony dramatized and ennobled their sacrifices. Most of the other congressmen knew this, and they wanted to upgrade the veterans' status. Transforming the Vietnam soldier from an Ugly American into a patriot who innocently carried out the policy of elected leaders, Congress tried to create a positive image that all Americans could accept.

However, the very attempt to improve the veterans' status raised unsettling questions. Congressmen openly recognized that America's lower-income minorities were disproportionately represented in the armed forces and that the trauma of war bore more heavily on them, economically and psychologically, than it would have on a middle-class army. An uncomplimentary view of the returning soldier accompanied this recognition. The congressmen made no mention of the crimes allegedly committed by American soldiers in Vietnam; however, they did recognize publicly "statistics such as the fact that 25 percent of the persons incarcerated in correctional institutions in America are veterans of the Vietnam War," along with the veterans' need for "an expanded drug and alcohol abuse treatment and rehabilitation program." Family counseling needs were also described: "Of those veterans married before going to Vietnam almost 40 percent were divorced within six months of their return" (U.S. House of Representatives 1979, pp. 12589, 12593, 12584; for details, see Johnson [1976, 1980]; U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs 1981). Congresswoman Mikulski recognized the veterans' social marginality by pleading for the government to "be responsive to the unique problems which they face . . . so that they will be better able to fill their roles in society." Congressman Mikva spoke to the same point. Existing veterans' programs, he explained, are not enough for this group. "We must back up this symbolic recognition of their efforts for our country with . . . educational and rehabilitative programs geared to their special needs" (U.S. House of Representatives 1979, pp. 12583, 12588). Here, as elsewhere, the emphasis is on the veterans' shortcomings, and this emphasis reflects society's desire to reconstitute them morally.

It is in this last aspect of congressional discussion that we gain access to the deeper layers of the text being written about the veterans. This text, as presented in the *Congressional Record*, both reveals and participates in a moment of transition in the official assessment of the Vietnam veteran. Our reading of the text locates a residual suspicion about the veterans' psychological and moral status. When one notes all the negative references to the veterans—their employment problems, their physical problems, their psychological problems, their sense of alienation, their inclination toward drugs and crime—it becomes evident that an idiom more relevant to social deviants than to returning soldiers dominated

congressional discourse. And this discourse cuts deeper and seemingly truer insofar as its topic included men who had been the agents, if not the architects, of America's first military defeat.

Never during the progress of this discussion did its participants express the desire to memorialize the heroic side of the Vietnam War. They felt that war memories could be expressed suitably in a Vietnam Veterans Week and in a series of veteran rehabilitation programs. A marked utilitarianism became a key part of this commemorative project.

ENTREPRENEURS AND SPONSORS

Negative characterizations of the Vietnam veteran might have eventually undermined his positive recognition were it not for a new development, one that was oriented less to the living than to the dead. During the time that the Vietnam-Era Caucus worked on its legislation, a former army corporal from a working-class family, Jan Scruggs, had independently decided on a plan of his own. As noted above, one of the premises of Vietnam Veterans Week was that the soldier must be separated from the cause. This separation is precisely what Scruggs aimed to celebrate publicly. At first, his idea attracted little notice, but it eventually overshadowed Vietnam Veterans Week in commemorative significance. He would build a memorial to the men who served in Vietnam and would inscribe on it the names of all the war dead. The plan represented a different solution to the commemorative genre problem than those previously proposed. It was different in that it combined the traditional idea of a stone monument to the war dead with the radical idea of excluding from it any prominent symbol of national honor and glory. In place of such a symbol would appear a list of the dead soldiers' names—58,000 of them. On May 28, 1979, Scruggs announced the formation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund to raise money to build the monument.

The accumulation of money to build the Veterans Memorial did not automatically follow from the desire to build it. What needed to be overcome was not only opposition from the still vocal critics of the war,⁷ but

⁷ "Let's not perpetuate the memory of such dishonorable events [the Vietnam War] by erecting monuments to them," wrote a former antiwar advocate in a letter to Jan Scruggs. It was a typical letter in that the "chief source of potential opposition" to any veterans memorial was, in Scruggs's view, "the antiwar movement" (*National Geographic* [May 1985], p. 558). To commemorate the soldier was, from this viewpoint, to insult the true heroes. In the words of another war opponent: "Buttering up Vietnam veterans as 'forgotten heroes' is a slap in the face directed at millions in this country who resisted the war" (Hess 1983, p. 126). These sentiments were expressed throughout the Memorial's development. Thus, when the Commission of Fine Arts conducted hearings on the addition of a statue to the Memorial site, the antiwar voices were heard again. Why would anyone want a "literal representation" of the American

more important, a sense of uncertainty in the public at large as to what the monument would look like and what it would represent. These suspicions and uncertainties were relieved when the Memorial's original framing rule—"Honor the soldier, not the cause"—was reiterated in the very selection of its sponsors. Chosen were men and women who differed visibly and widely on many political questions but shared the desire to honor the Vietnam veterans. The sponsoring leaders and celebrities included Vernon Jordan, president of the National Urban League; Ruben Bonilla, national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens; Carol Burnett, the actress who played the mother of a soldier killed in the war in the television drama, *Friendly Fire*; First Lady Rosalynn Carter and former First Lady Betty Ford; Father Theodore Hesburgh, president of the University of Notre Dame; Bob Hope; Rocky Bleir, described as a "wounded Vietnam veteran who came back to star with the Pittsburgh Steelers"; and Admiral James B. Stockdale, formerly a prisoner of war and now president of The Citadel. These individuals represented many sectors of society: blacks, Hispanics, women, religious and academic figures, entertainment and sports celebrities, and military men. With the support of this noncontroversial coalition of sponsors, funds were quickly raised to pay for design and construction costs and, by July 4, 1980, a few days after the proclamation of Vietnam Veterans' Week, President Carter signed a joint resolution that reserved a two-acre site in Constitution Gardens, between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, for the Veterans Memorial's placement.

But if Scruggs's plans were proceeding apace, the ambiguous image of the Vietnam veteran was again evoked, this time by the mass media. Unlike in the congressional debates, however, the evocation here was oblique. One needed to read between the lines. Now Jan Scruggs himself was the object of representation. The different accounts of Scruggs's moment of "inspiration" in the spring of 1979 disclosed different visions of the Vietnam veteran. Furthermore, these accounts revealed the kind of moral entrepreneur that the sponsoring institutions were willing to support. For these institutions, the merit of the Memorial project turned on the credibility of its promoter.

The Case of Jan Scruggs

Most accounts of Jan Scruggs's memorial-making efforts began with a phrase like: "Ten years after he was seriously wounded by an enemy

role in Vietnam? asked one witness. The memorable images of the war, this witness went on to say, include not heroic military feats but rather a naked child running from her burning village, a South Vietnam officer shooting an unarmed guerilla through the head, and the National Guard shooting down students at Kent State.

grenade . . .” The fact that Scruggs was recognized as a wounded veteran is very important. Wounds in general play a significant role in the discourse about the Vietnam veterans and their memorial. That Scruggs’s wounds are invariably noted means that he is understood to speak authoritatively for the needs of the veterans. Wounds here are legitimating marks. The body of the veteran is, itself, the proof of intimate experience with war, of courage and manhood. Scruggs’s wounds make him a generalizable veteran, a collective representation in his own right. This characterization of Scruggs as, first and foremost, a wounded veteran has the effect of invoking the traditional notion of war hero. With that invocation, the traditional notion of a war memorial becomes more plausible.

Scruggs’s wounds also resonate with and help to resolve the negative image of the generic Vietnam veteran. The most redeemable veterans were those who had, quite literally, died from their wounds. It is their names alone, after all, that appear on the Memorial wall. The least likely candidates for commemoration were those who had escaped the war unscathed. However, Jan Scruggs, the veteran who carries 11 pieces of a grenade in his body, acts as a perfect mediator between the living and the dead. He is so perfect because he shares something with both. He has suffered for his participation in a bad war and has lived to redeem his fellows.

After Scruggs’s battle wounds are revealed, the story of his idea to build a memorial diverges along three different paths. Whether these three versions are all true or consistent with one another is unimportant. What is important about the stories is that they provided an image that supporters of the monument project could think with, an image they could use in their struggle against their own doubts and against the project’s opponents. The basic story is that the idea for a memorial came to Scruggs one night after he saw the film *The Deerhunter* (see, e.g., *Time*, July 14, 1980, p. 23). In this story, Scruggs is inspired by a fictional account of the war in which he had fought. Earlier films about Vietnam had depicted the war’s alienating effects; this film did the opposite: it portrayed the common man’s continued devotion to his country, despite personal tragedy, and so affirmed his right to the country’s admiration.

In the second story, Scruggs’s decision is influenced by Robert Jay Lifton’s work on “delayed stress syndrome,” which he had read before seeing *The Deerhunter* (*Esquire*, September 1985, p. 64). Here the moral entrepreneur derives his inspiration and authority not only from popular culture but also from science. This rendition seems positive, but its contents raise all the old doubts because the book that Scruggs is depicted as reading addresses the problems of readjustment experienced by so many veterans: flashbacks, unemployment, drug abuse, and violence. However, this rendition also reconstitutes the veteran, mitigating his

moral shortcomings by transforming them into medical and psychological problems.

In the final inspirational allegory, Scruggs gets his idea for a memorial while “nursing a bottle of bourbon” in contemplation of *The Deerhunter* (*U.S. News and World Report*, November 22, 1982). This scene is solitary and lonely in a way that seeing a movie or even reading a book is not. It also introduces the theme of alcohol, one of the several problems commonly believed to afflict the Vietnam veterans. The image of “nursing” a bottle might indicate despair were it not for the fact that Scruggs has been gainfully employed at the Department of Labor since his return from Vietnam. That the bottle he is nursing contains bourbon (the prosperous man’s drink) is symbolic of his personal stability. While many articles refer to him as a former “grunt” (enlisted man, as were most of the war’s social casualties), Scruggs is represented as having successfully negotiated his transition back to civilian life.

These characterizations set forth in its most coherent form an image that began to evolve the very moment Scruggs became a public figure. From the start, he was the sympathetic subject of popular media representations. For Congress he was a representative man, a living symbol of America’s hard-working, law-abiding veterans. The 1987 television movie *To Heal a Nation* (based on Scruggs’s book of the same title) shows that this perception has been as plausible in recent years as it was 10 years ago. In this movie, Scruggs and the Memorial get equal billing. Scruggs embodies the Memorial. He embodies it now, as he did then, in a multivocal way. Conceding that the Vietnam War would never be deemed justifiable, he appealed to those who opposed it. Having fought himself, and knowing how his comrades thought and felt about the war, he appealed to the veterans and their supporters. The Scruggs image was instrumental, not in preventing or ending the debate over the Veterans Memorial, but in reflecting it. In this way, Scruggs enlisted the patronage of men and women of differing and even opposing points of view. A less attractive man would have been less able to capitalize on Congress’s sense of its debt to the veterans.

It was the redemptive qualities of Scruggs’s project—precisely, its embodiment of gratitude, the only currency for paying off a moral debt—that congressional supporters emphasized. As President Carter approved Congress’s resolution, he expressed his belief that the formal honoring of the veteran would also promote the healing of a nation divided by war. To this end, the Memorial fund’s directors continued to avoid political statements in both fund-raising efforts and in contemplation of the Memorial design. The universal support of the Senate and strong support of the House were based on this same requirement: that the Memorial make no reference to the war, only to the men who fought

it. Political neutrality was the condition for the support of other sponsoring organizations, including the Reserve Officers Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Marine Corps League, Retired Officers Association, and American Gold Star Mothers. These organizations had been assured by Scruggs that the Memorial “will stand as a symbol of our unity as a nation and as a focal point of all Americans regardless of their views on Vietnam” (U.S. House of Representatives 1980, p. 4805). Indeed, its very name would be noncontroversial: it would be a “Veterans Memorial” rather than a “War Memorial.” The federal agencies responsible for approving the final design and placement of the Memorial, particularly the Commission of Fine Arts and the Department of Interior, were guided by this same principle.

An apolitical monument was thus supported by the apolitical makeup of its sponsoring agencies. For popular wars the makeup of such groups is less important, since consensus on the object of commemoration already exists. The range of political support for a Vietnam Memorial was stressed precisely because political consensus on the Vietnam cause was minimal. Scruggs’s solution to the genre problem was not implemented until it attracted the support of a political spectrum wide enough to make his solution credible, or so it seemed.

VISION AND REVISION: FROM PURE TO MIXED GENRE

Recreating the context and process out of which the Vietnam Veterans Memorial developed, we came to see it not as a monument that ignores political meanings, but as a kind of *coincidentia oppositorum*—an agency that brings these opposed meanings together without resolving them. In this regard, the first and most fundamental point to emphasize is the nation’s failure to reach an agreement on the Vietnam War’s purposes and consequences. Hence there is a “genre problem”: how to create a memorial that celebrates the virtues of the individual veteran without reference to his cause.⁸ As this criterion was set beside the attitude of the Congress toward the Vietnam veteran, an attitude that combined anxiety about his moral shortcomings (crime, drugs, and alcohol) with gratitude for his sacrifices, there arose pressures in the government to specify the Memorial’s essential contours before it invited artists to submit their own designs. Informed by ambivalence about both the cause and its participants, these specifications pushed the Memorial in the direction of the muted and unobtrusive. Thus, in a formal letter approving the design

⁸ See Greenblatt (1983) for a discussion of Albrecht Durer’s monumental solution to the obverse problem: how to celebrate the virtue of a cause without reference to its participants.

competition, Department of Interior official Bill Whalen explained to the chairman of the Subcommittee on Parks, Dale Bumpers: "Since the proposed memorial is of great significance, and does not memorialize a single person or event, but rather a 10-year period of our Nation's history and is envisioned as a landscaped solution emphasizing horizontal rather than vertical elements, we concur with the report which indicates that a site in Constitution Gardens is preferable" (U.S. Senate 1980, p. 9434). Whalen clearly views the memorial as significant and noteworthy, yet he understands that a problem inheres in the design of any monument to commemorate this particular "10-year period." As significant as it might be, the memorial cannot be grand, vertical, or heroic. Like any "landscaped solution," it must hug the ground. It must be modest, horizontal, and nonheroic.

The memorial chosen by the Commission of Fine Arts from the more than 1,400 designs submitted was, indeed, the simplest and least imposing: two unadorned black walls, each about 250 feet in length, composed of 70 granite panels increasing in height from several inches at the end of each wall to 10 feet where they come together at a 125 degree angle. Although this angle aligns the two walls with the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument, the walls themselves are placed below ground level, invisible from most vantage points on or near the Mall. The Vietnam War is thus defined as a national event, but in a spatial context that brackets off that event from those commemorated by neighboring monuments. The walls add to this sense of detachment by their internal format, which draws the viewer into a separate warp of time and space. As one moves from the edge of one wall to the point where it joins the other, one experiences a descending movement in space and a circular movement in time, for the 57,939 soldiers' names appear in the chronological order of the dates of their deaths, such that the war's first and last fatalities are joined at the walls' conjunction.

The commission's preference for this design was unanimous. However, for every layman who approved that choice, another seemed to be enraged by it. Those who shared the designer's goals were inclined to believe she had achieved them. Maya Ying Lin declared that her design was not meant to convey a particular political message but to evoke "feelings, thoughts, and emotions" of a variant and private nature: "What people see or don't see is their own projection."⁹ Jan Scruggs

⁹ Peter Ehrenhaus's interpretation follows closely Maya Lin's intention. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial," he writes, "willfully relinquishes the traditional role to speak as the official voice of the community, explaining the meaning of past events, reassuring us that these deaths had meaning, celebrating the virtue of sacrifice. . . . Rather than electing 'speech' through a traditional form of symbolic expression, it opts for silence. It . . . places both the burden and the freedom upon us to discover

concurred: "The Memorial says exactly what we wanted to say about Vietnam—absolutely nothing." Indeed, on the original design the word, Vietnam, did not even appear (a statement indicating that the names on the wall belong to dead soldiers, and identifying the war in which they fought, was added later). This minimalist response to the commemorative task impressed one of the jurors as being "reverential"; another called it "a simple solution for a confused age"; a third saw "no escape from its power." Ellsworth Bunker, former ambassador to South Vietnam, found it to be "a distinguished and fitting mark of respect." Likewise, the *New York Times* applauded the design's "extreme dignity and restraint." It "seems to capture all the feelings of ambiguity and anguish that the Vietnam War evoked [and] conveys the only point about the war on which people may agree: that those who died should be remembered" (Hess 1983, p. 1235; Scruggs and Swerdlow 1985, pp. 63, 68, 69, 97; *New York Times*, May 18, 1981).

It is difficult to tell whether Maya Lin's supporters admired her design because it was an appropriately novel war memorial or because it was not a war memorial at all. The detractors, on the other hand, made frequent comparison between Lin's design and traditional war monuments, highlighting the confrontation between two commemorative styles—a heroic style traditionally associated with noble causes fought for and won, and what could be called an aheroic style, newly conceived for the tasteful recognition of those who had died for a useless and less-than-noble cause. Most veterans, however, did see something noble, if not useful, in the Vietnam War, and for them the Commission of Fine Arts had gone too far. One veteran, a member of the Memorial fund, described the design chosen by the commission as "the most insulting and demeaning memorial to our experience that was possible . . . a degrading ditch." As to its color: "Black is the universal color of shame, sorrow and degradation in all races, all societies worldwide." For another dissenting fund member, the sinking of the monument into the earth was an admission that the United States committed crimes in Vietnam. (Here are enlargements of the criminality theme that marked congressional discussions about the veterans.) The wall was also condemned as "an open urinal," "a wailing wall for anti-draft demonstrators," "a tribute to Jane Fonda," and a "perverse prank" that would baffle the general public. Another critic, who happened to be the Memorial's biggest financial backer, called the art commission's choice a "slap in the face," a "tombstone," "something for New York intellectuals," a kind

what these past events mean, whether these deaths do have meaning, what virtue is to be found in sacrifice, and what our own relationship should be to our political institutions" (1988, p. 55).

of 21st-century art that few would appreciate. To make matters worse, the proposed order of names for the wall presents “a random scattering” that can only confound loved ones. Other critics, including the editors of *National Review*, complained about the names themselves. Since the memorial focuses on individuals, not the war, “it makes death in war a private matter rather than a sacrifice for a collective cause”¹⁰ (Hess 1983, pp. 122–25; Scruggs and Swerdlow 1985, pp. 68, 71, 82–83).

Opposition to the memorial wall was expressed by attacks on details like color, shape, and location, but underlying all specific objections was a disdain for the style itself. Many believed that that style violated the limits of the war-memorial genre. Designed to be apolitical, this memorial struck critics as nonpatriotic and nonheroic. It conveyed a conception of the war and a conception of the soldier that ran counter to those of many Americans. These Americans, responded Jan Scruggs, “wanted the Memorial to make Vietnam what it had never been in reality: a good, clean, glorious war seen as necessary and supported by the united country.” One leading opponent of the design conceded that the nation had not looked back favorably on the Vietnam War; however, he believed that “history can be re-evaluated” and “a piece of art remains, as a testimony to a particular moment in history, and we are under a solemn obligation to get that moment down as correctly as possible” (quoted in Scruggs and Swerdlow 1985, p. 94).

Most critics believed that only a “real” memorial could correctly represent the Vietnam War, but since that was politically impossible, they sought an addition to the present design in order to offset the “national humiliation” it perpetuated. At length, a compromise was conceived. An American flag, and next to that, a realistic statue of three soldiers, identifiable as white, black, and Hispanic, portrayed returning from patrol and gazing toward the names on the wall, would bring the original design closer to the traditional genre—would make it look more like a real war memorial.

Although their reasons may have differed, over 90% of the Vietnam veterans and 75% of the nonveterans surveyed after attending the Memorial’s dedication ceremony¹¹ were in favor of including the flag as an

¹⁰ For a sympathetic account of the Memorial as an antiwar symbol, see Foss (1986).

¹¹ This mail survey included 888 people, including 530 Vietnam veterans, 96 veterans’ family members, 89 Vietnam-era veterans, and 140 nonveterans. Although the author reports that the number of respondents is “far more than is required for statistical validity,” he is silent as to the actual number of nonrespondents. This author was motivated to conduct the survey because he believed strongly in the need to add a flag and statue to the Memorial site; however, he declares that every part of the inquiry, from question wording to analysis, was conducted properly, and with the supervision of a “prominent expert in survey research” (U.S. House of Representatives 1982, pp. E5108-9).

integral part of the Memorial site. At least 85% of every group surveyed (Vietnam veterans, Vietnam veterans' families, Vietnam-era veterans, other veterans, and nonveterans) approved of placing both a flag and statue somewhere on the Memorial grounds. And a majority in every group, ranging from 85% of the Vietnam veterans to 56% of the nonveterans, wanted the Memorial to include an inscription of the purpose for which the war was fought. It was the Vietnam veterans who felt most strongly about these changes, if strength of feeling can be gauged from reactions to the design of the wall by itself. Only a third of the veterans, compared with three-quarters of the nonveterans, reported a favorable impression of this design. The addition of the flag and the statue, the veterans claimed, would express a belief they could not find represented in the wall alone: that there is a nobility inherent in serving and dying for one's country. Combat, death, the nation—these are the concepts that many people wanted to see emphasized together (U.S. House of Representatives 1982, pp. 5107–8).

These openly nationalistic ideas met strong resistance in the Commission of Fine Arts, but Interior Secretary James Watt, moved by widespread support elsewhere, demanded their acceptance as a condition of his approving the Memorial site. And so by mid-1983, the flag was set in place. On Veterans Day 1984, two years after the Memorial's dedication, the statue was unveiled.

With this new configuration, the conservative president and his administration seemed to have warmed up to the Memorial. Echoes of the 1960s antiwar protests from the reading of the names of the war dead may have induced President Reagan to send an obscure official to represent the government at the 1982 unveiling of the Memorial wall. At the 1984 unveiling of the statue, the president himself officiated. A few days later, the Army decided that it would be proper after all to add the meager remains of an American killed in Vietnam to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The Vietnam war dead were thus sanctified and incorporated into the nation's military heritage and their cause correspondingly elevated. The unpopularity and the outcome of the Vietnam War, however, imposed a limit to how far its commemoration could evolve in this traditional direction.

FLAGS AND EFFIGIES IN THE MARKING OF A LOST WAR

The combination of flag, statue, and name-filled wall reflected profound disagreement as to how the Vietnam War should be remembered and conveyed this disagreement by an apparent binary opposition. The wall was believed to elevate the participant and ignore the cause; the flag and statue were believed to elevate the nation and its causes above the

participant. However, the qualities and the relationship between these two patterns of meaning turned out to be more complex than anyone anticipated.

Public discourse about the addition of the flag and statue reveal deep anxieties evoked by the Memorial's original conception. Primary among these was the anxiety about masculinity and its representation. Tradition links masculinity with heroism and strength, but this linkage is weakened by defeat in war. Such concern was rarely if ever openly discussed, but it showed up in the identities of the artists, the artists' attitudes toward the war and their respective contributions to the Memorial, and in their supporters' and critics' own understanding of the war and its soldiers.

Maya Ying Lin was a young, Yale University student when her design was chosen as the winner of the Memorial competition. Lin was an articulate spokesperson for her design and was able to reflect on the way it embodied her intentions (which necessarily coincided with those of the Commission of Fine Arts). When asked, in an interview for *Art in America*, whether she thought the Memorial had a female sensibility, she responded: "In a world of phallic memorials that rise upward it certainly does. I didn't set out to conquer the earth, or overpower it the way Western man usually does. I don't think I've made a passive piece, but neither is it a memorial to the idea of war" (Hess 1983, p. 121). Lin distinguishes her design from the "masculine" memorials by referring to its horizontal positioning and its refusal to dominate the landscape. She does not, however, associate such a design with passivity or weakness. She is articulating an alternative notion of strength. But, intentional fallacy caveats aside for the moment, is this indeed an adequate symbol for the commemoration of anything having to do with war? Is not war, after all, always and everywhere, about the kind of masculine strength associated with conquest and domination?

Referring to the sense of responsibility soldiers have for each other during war, John Wheeler, one of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial project's organizers, and a veteran himself, wrote: "I consider my commitment as a statement that there are things worth dying for. It is a masculine statement. This is why war has tended to be viewed as a masculine enterprise" (1984, p. 140). Clearly the question of masculinity and its meaning was in the air, and the peculiar nature of the Vietnam War made it all the more confusing. The very raising of this question had broad implications for the resolution of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's genre problem.

A strictly semiotic reading of the wall would highlight its "femininity." It is an opening in nature. It is womblike in its embrace of the visitor. The wall also reflects the visitor in its stone, thus eliciting a form of empathy, a trait traditionally considered more available to women than

to men. What, then, remains of war, an archetypically masculine endeavor, in this Memorial? If critics of the Memorial's initial design were occupied by this question, they did not ask it directly. The unconscious strategy was to deflect and displace. Rather than make an issue of the threat to masculinity by feminine forms, the problem was linked to the Memorial's blackness, its placement within rather than upon the earth, its suggestion of weakness and shame rather than pride and strength.¹² Accordingly, Maya Lin's critics made a list of demands that would draw out the Memorial from the inferior realm of darkness and earth into the superior realm of light and sky. They wanted the black granite changed to white; they wanted the walls moved above ground; they wanted a flag. National honor would thus be restored. The masculine (or "phallic," as Maya Lin would put it) would also be asserted and, in the flag, find its patriotic representation.

In addition, a decision was made to "erect" a statue that would serve as a counterpoint to the "establishment" of the wall. Here, Congress had turned away from its own unconscious assertion of masculinity by revising the wording of the Congressional Joint Resolution authorizing the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. The resolution was passed with the original phrase "erect a memorial" changed to read "establish a memorial" (U.S. Senate 1980, p. 9433). However, once the new decision to erect a statue was made, and the sculptor Frederick Hart chosen to implement it, the masculine purview in matters of representing the veterans was overtly acknowledged. The sculptor himself certainly saw it this way. Drawing an explicit comparison between himself and Maya Lin, Hart claimed a special understanding of the veterans: he had studied them for three years. In this connection, he put one of our society's masculine traditions to the service of his craft: "I became close friends with many vets, drank with them in bars." While this experience converts directly into artistic privilege, "Lin's piece is a serene exercise in contemporary art done in a vacuum with no knowledge of the subject" (Hess 1983, p. 124). But how could a young, university-sheltered woman, or any woman, know this subject? In *Time's* assessment of the statue, we are told that the three soldiers "suggest the wordless fellowship that is forged only in combat." In our society, as Wheeler claimed, only men can comprehend that wordless "fellowship."

Even if we grant this claim, the anxious response of the Memorial's critics had, as noted above, another source: the fact of defeat. Since few things threaten traditional concepts of manhood more than defeat in

¹² These features of the Memorial might be viewed by at least one symbolic anthropologist as implying its autochthonous (feminine) as opposed to cultural (masculine) origins (Ortner 1974; see also Jeffords 1988).

battle, the symbolic burden must be very great indeed on any memorial that seeks to elevate the losing protagonists. As one military officer put it, "Why build a memorial to losers?" (*National Geographic*, May 1985, p. 558). If both the losers and the loss were ignored and the emphasis placed on the transcendent values of the cause, then perhaps no one's masculinity would be threatened. But since the military defeat could not be ignored, the flag and statue can be read as palliatives to doubts about the toughness of America's fighting men. Perhaps this is why the statue was so important to Maya Lin's critics: it drew attention away from the individual men who fought and lost in Vietnam and shifted that attention onto generic, that is, timeless, heroic soldiers. A neat idea, but it was not a convincing one. Its originators did not even convince themselves.

Let us take a closer look at the statue of the three soldiers. It is of a greenish-golden hue. The soldiers, seemingly disoriented, and garbed in finely wrought but distressed uniforms, gaze at the wall. Weapons hang uselessly from two of the soldiers' lowered arms and rest across the other soldier's back. Here, then, is the realism that critics of the wall's abstraction desired. Here is life—as opposed to the wall's expression of death—but it is life exhausted and confused. These men are of the war, but not at the moment in it. And since the soldiers are placed on only a modest pedestal, visitors cannot even figuratively look up to them; instead, they confront the soldiers almost at eye level. The mien of this statue is not heroic.

Considering the memorial complex as a whole, we find an even broader pattern of assertion and qualification. The wall embodied a controversial assertion: that individuals should be remembered and their cause ignored; the qualifications came with the flag and statue. These, in turn, were beset by their own internal tensions. The statue was conceived as a reactive assertion of pride, heroism, and masculinity, but, through the particular form it took, it emerged as a tempering of all these things. The flag seems to be unconditionally assertive because it is the only part of the memorial site that draws our eyes upward, but we notice in the peculiar dedication inscribed on its base a kind of backing off: "This flag affirms the principles of freedom for which [the Vietnam veterans] fought and their pride in having served under difficult circumstances." The euphemism is transparent enough. By "difficult circumstances" we are to understand not the power of our enemy but the feebleness of our cause. In this light, the similarities among the three parts of the Memorial become more salient than their differences, despite the realism of the statue's figures and the vertical prominence of the flag. Whether we look down, across, or up, we find ambivalence about the meaning of this war and its protagonists refracted throughout.

While the addition of the flag and statue made the Vietnam Memorial

look more like a traditional war monument, it also amplified the tensions and ambivalence that induced the original departure from a traditional war monument design. The vehicle for that departure, the wall of names, admits of its own internal qualifications, but these are more subtle than the ones built into the Memorial's two other parts and are perhaps more important as clues to its sociological significance.

THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF NAMES

After reflecting on the criteria for the memorial competition, Maya Lin expressed her personal agreement with what they were meant to accomplish. "Many earlier memorials," she said, "were propagandized statements about the victory, the issues, the politics, and not about the people who served and died. I felt a memorial should be honest about the reality of war and be for the people who gave their lives" (*National Geographic*, May 1985, p. 557). Such a memorial, Lin also agreed, must contain the name of every soldier who died.

The partial list of war dead is a familiar memorial device, typically found on plaques in schools, churches, city halls, and town squares to mark local sacrifices made on behalf of national causes. Such a list is also found on larger memorial complexes, like the wall of the missing at the national cemeteries in Honolulu and Manila. Lin's conception is different. She presents a national list, a complete inventory of war dead, but she does not make it part of a recognizable monument. She presents nothing but a list, without even a label to identify its contents. She thus defines the war memorial genre as broadly as it has ever been defined before.

To list the names of every fallen soldier, with no symbolic reference to the cause or country for which they died, immediately highlights the individual. But, once it has been determined that the individual will overshadow cause and country, the task of constructing that individual becomes the primary concern. Precisely what, and how much, is to be said? Since Maya Lin's response to the question is to take the naming criterion and make it her dominant motif, there is no identifying of rank, nor any other individualizing markers, such as membership in a specific military service (army, navy, etc.) or place of civilian residence. With the individual's uniqueness thus dissolved into a homogenizing sequence of death dates, how can one claim that the names on the wall personify anything that American society values?

The Memorial's failure to dignify the names of the war dead was lamented by many. The *National Review*, for example, compared the names engraved on the unembellished Memorial wall to a list of traffic accidents (September 18, 1981, p. 1064). The magazine *USA Today*

(March 1983, p. 70) observed that “nowhere on the memorial was there to be any reference to where or why these people died, and no flag or patriotic symbol of any kind would indicate that honor or dedication to duty were involved in their deaths.”¹³ More frequently, however, the Memorial’s naming scheme was regarded as a singularly American tribute to such values as pluralism, egalitarianism, and respect for the individual. In other words, the very fact that Americans can honor a name, regardless of rank and, one might hazard to say, regardless of mission, reveals the respect that American society gives to the individual.

But here, too, an alternative meaning can be discerned. A *Newsweek* article (reprinted in *Reader’s Digest*) illustrated this meaning in its coverage of the National Cathedral candlelight vigil. The article begins with an attempt to find colorful distinctions in an otherwise undifferentiated and tedious inventory of names. However, the particularizing makes use of only one vehicle—ethnic diversity:

Names. Jose K. Brown, Sai G. Gew, Glenn F. Cashdollar, Kenyu Shimbukuru, Famous L. Lane, Witold J. Leszczynski, Thomas L. LittleSun, Salvatore J. Piscitello, Max Lieberman, Savas Escamilla Trevino, Billy Joe Lawrence. For 56 hours they read the names in the gothic confines of the National Cathedral. Rhythmic Spanish names. Tongue-twisting Polish names, guttural German, exotic African, homely Anglo-Saxon names. Chinese, Polynesian, Indian, and Russian names. They are names which reach deep into the heart of America, each testimony to a family’s decision, sometime in the past, to wrench itself from home and culture to test our country’s promise of new opportunities and a better life. [*Newsweek*, November 22, 1982, p. 82]

This passage depicts America as a melting pot, but it is a melting pot whose contents show some of the stereotyped features commonly ascribed to different nationalities. The southern Europeans have rhythm, Africans are exotic. Such stereotyping further undermines the celebration of diversity by implicitly reasserting the salience of class. The names sampled by *Newsweek*’s author represent most of this country’s economically and politically disadvantaged groups. Even the Anglo-Saxon names are designated “homely,” and remind us more of Appalachia than of Main Street.¹⁴ Thus, the article’s celebration of America’s ethnic pluralism is muted at a deeper level through caricatured references to the working-

¹³ More recently, Terrance Fox saw this anonymity as a triumph of the “new collectivism” (1989, pp. 211–20).

¹⁴ See, e.g., Bobbie Ann Mason’s novel, *In Country*: “It was country boys. When you get to that memorial, you look at the names. You’ll see all those country boy names, I bet you anything. Bobby Gene and Freddie Ray and Jimmy Bob Calhoun. I knew a boy named Jimmy Bob Calhoun that got killed over there. You look at those names and tell me if they’re not mostly country boy names. Boys who didn’t know their ass from their elbow” (1985, pp. 235–36).

class men who fought the war. The familiar class relations of wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness, are thereby reaffirmed—not only in *Newsweek* and *Reader's Digest* but also on the wall of the Memorial itself.

Note, too, how the designer of that wall, Maya Ying Lin, is named in the media. If, as the stereotype goes, all Asians look alike, how much more must their names sound alike. Thus five prestigious publications misspell Lin's name in four different ways: Maya Yin Lin (*Time*, November 9, 1981); Maya Ling Lin (*Washington Post*, November 12, 1984); Maya Yang Lin (*National Review*, December 11, 1981, and *New Republic*, December 1982); Maya Ling Yin (*U.S. News and World Report*, November 22, 1982). Carelessness in the public rendering of Lin's name undermines still further the respect for diversity that the monument is supposed to affirm.¹⁵

Whatever the media's attitude toward the Memorial's designer, their references to the American soldier's ethnicity, along with doubts expressed elsewhere about his powers as a fighter and about the cause for which he fought, all contribute to the undermining of widespread desires for a heroic monument to the Vietnam War. However, these negative themes hardly exhaust what was said about the Memorial and its men, much less what was felt about them. These residual statements and, most notably, these feelings transformed the Memorial wall into a more glorious war monument than the critics could have imagined—a monument that made even the most traditional versions of this commemorative genre, with their unqualified affirmation of heroism and patriotism, seem inadequate.

USES OF GENRE: THE ENSHRINEMENT PROCESS

The meaning of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is defined by the way people behave in reference to it. Some monuments are rarely talked about or visited and never put to ceremonial use. Other monuments, like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, are used often as formal ceremonial sites and visited year after year by large numbers of people. Between the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and its visitors, a very different relationship obtains. Not only is the Memorial an object of frequent ceremony and frequent visitation (more than 2.5 million visitors and 1,100–1,500 reunions per year),¹⁶ it is also an object with which visitors enter into active

¹⁵ The embarrassment is compounded by the Pentagon official who referred to Maya Lin's Chinese descent in his criticism of her memorial (Hess 1983, p. 121).

¹⁶ Personal communication from Duery Felton, Jr., curator, Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection Museum and Archeological Regional Storage Facility, National Park Service.

and affective relationships. These relationships have thwarted all original intentions as to what the Memorial should be and represent.

Conceived as something to be passively looked at and contemplated, the Vietnam Memorial has become an object of emotion. This is not the case for the Memorial site as a whole, just the wall and its names. The names on the wall are touched, their letters traced by the moving finger. The names are caressed. The names are reproduced on paper by pencil rubbing and taken home. And something is left from home itself—a material object bearing special significance to the deceased or a written statement by the visitor or mourner.

The dedications of the aggrieved are a spectacle that to many is more moving than the Memorial wall itself. More goes into spectators' reactions, however, than morbid curiosity, for the scenes of mourning are not altogether private affairs. These scenes make palpable a collective loss known to all. Not only, therefore, do friends and family bring their personal grief to the Memorial wall, but society exercises a moral pressure over those not directly affected by loss to add their presence to the situation and to align their sentiments with it.

This moral pressure produces the large gatherings from which much of the Memorial's dramatic impact derives. By contrast, when the Memorial's grounds are deserted, its wall appears less magnetic, less moving, less memorable. Durkheim was referring to such a contrast when he declared that the experience of being in a sacred shrine "is only the sentiment inspired by the *group* in its members, but projected out of the consciousnesses that experience them, and objectified. To be objectified they are fixed upon some object which thus becomes sacred. . . . Therefore the sacred character assumed by an object is not implied in the intrinsic properties of this latter: it is added to them" (1965, p. 261). Just so, the Veterans Memorial is properly designated a sacred shrine because it is the object of solemn assemblies in which moral sentiments arise and reinforce one another.

Since assembly and arousal cannot in themselves account for the Memorial's sacred character, we must not follow Durkheim too closely. Durkheim believed that the sacredness of an object like the Memorial wall obtains exclusively from the way people react to it. Yet, the wall is more than just a convenient screen on which the Memorial's visitors project their sentiments. The wall itself is an evoker of these sentiments. If this were not the case, if any object would do to embody collective feeling, as Durkheim believed, then we would be hard pressed to understand why other parts of the Memorial—the flag and the statue—do not evoke the same reactions as does the wall. Material tokens are placed much less frequently at the flag and statue than at the wall; expressions of strong emotion occur almost exclusively at the wall; the demeanor of

visitors is more solemn, by far, in the vicinity of the wall; the traveling or portable shrine consists of the wall alone. It is the design of the wall—specifically, its list of names—that induces these reactions. The names are the objects of a ritual relation that no other part of the Memorial site can sustain. Withal, the ideals and memory of the cause, lacking comparable symbolic and social supports, fade into the background.

However, there is another side to this relationship, one that highlights a different aspect of the tension between national causes and their participants. To the original dilemma of how to honor the participant without reference to the cause, there is a corresponding reciprocal problem of how to ignore the cause without denying the participant. That problem did not occur to the art commissioners who wanted to protect the wall's artistic (ideological?) serenity from "corny patriotic claptrap" (U.S. House of Representatives 1982, p. E5108). But what kind of protection could they give? The corniness arose not from the addition of a flag and statue but from the way visitors conducted themselves in the vicinity of the wall. The impulses and sentiments motivating this conduct, however, were varied and complicated.

USES OF GENRE: THE REPRESENTATION OF AMBIVALENCE

All nonperishable articles left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial are collected each day and kept at the Museum and Archeological Regional Storage Facility. Row after row of airtight shelters preserve these "gifts" for the future, thus extending the Memorial in space and in time. This part of the Veterans Memorial complex is the most populist, for its contents, in accordance with Interior Department policy, are determined by the people who visit the Memorial and not by professional curators. It is difficult to tell whether or not the idea for such a museum was part of the Interior Department's struggle against the elitism of the Commission of Fine Arts. That the museum collection negates the complaints of the Memorial's early detractors as well as the praise of its early defenders is more certain. An assessment of the objects themselves shows this to be so.

The most colorful objects left by visitors are flowers, taped to the wall or placed on the ground beneath a loved one's name. Nothing of a political nature is embodied in these floral displays; however, the Park Service's inventory of other (nonperishable) items does convey a coherent political message. This inventory shows that the one object most frequently left by the wall is a small American flag attached to a stick and set in the ground below the name that the visitor desired to mark. Through this offering, visitors uttered a political statement that was not supposed to be made. They asserted their patriotism, their loyalty to a

nation. Whether they got the idea themselves or copied it from one another, they could think of no better way to dignify their loved one's memory than to associate his name with his country's emblem.

These assertions are amplified by other objects. The largest category of objects, almost a third of everything that has been deposited by the visitors, consists of military items, mostly patches and insignias marking military-unit membership, as well as parts of uniforms, dog tags, identification bracelets, medals, awards, and certificates. The memorial site was thus decorated by symbols of the roles through which living veterans once enacted their commitment to the nation. These symbols began to appear in great profusion as soon as the Memorial was dedicated and continued to appear two years later when the statue of the three soldiers was unveiled. Designed to draw attention to the individual and away from the nation and its cause, the Memorial's wall turns out to be a most dramatic locus of patriotic feeling. The wall's use moved it toward that traditional war monument genre that opponents and supporters alike once believed it deviated from.

When profusely decorated with patriotic emblems, the wall alone may enhance our idea of the traditional war monument, but it cannot embody that idea. This is because patriotism is not the only response that the wall excites. The Memorial wall has in fact become a kind of debating forum—a repository of diverse opinions about the very war that occasioned its construction. Traditional war monuments serve no such reflexive function.

From its very inception, the Memorial's sponsors insisted that it would make no statement about the war—a promise predicated on the assumption that political silence could somehow be ensured by the Memorial's design. An ordinance that expressly prohibits political demonstrations on Memorial grounds supplemented this assumption. Thus deprived of a traditional public forum, political opinions were, instead, inserted into many of the written statements brought to the wall. Letters, poems, and memos, often accompanied by photographs, can be viewed analytically as publicly accessible private sentiments or as privatized public opinion. Either way, they articulate the public's diverse visions of Vietnam. Not all these written statements included opinions about the war itself. Among the opinions that were expressed in the letters, however, more than half were ambivalent or negative. And the wall is the site where these opinions were displayed. One poem declares: "And in that time / When men decide and feel safe / To call the war insane / Take one moment to embrace / Those gentle heroes / You left behind." Another correspondent laments the soldiers who went "So far from home and the land of their own / To fight in a war the reason unknown." A more subtle critique is seen in a letter written by an American soldier fighting

in Vietnam in 1968: "Anyway, all the news is bad this time. I have 71 days to go now and if I make it I hope I never have to come back here again." Written on the letter is the location on the wall of that soldier's name. Finally, an obviously alienated correspondent exclaims: "Still don't know why? Think you guys may be better off."¹⁷

Some visitors to the Memorial admitted their inability to understand why Americans died in Vietnam, but they considered their ignorance a personal problem, not a sign that the war and its deaths lacked purpose: "God has His reason; / God has His plan— / The reasons are not available / To the Ordinary Man." Others were more successful in their search for the war's purpose and made their discovery explicit in letters. A 13-year-old girl declared: "I feel like I owe you men something because if it were not for you, I might not be living in a free country."

These letters and poems, no less than the other items brought to the wall, reveal that many people are unable to look back on the war in a politically neutral way.¹⁸ Notwithstanding the claims of its official sponsors, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial elicits the same tensions as those that divided the nation during the war itself. As time passes, this capacity to evoke affirmative and critical sentiments endures. The volume of objects deposited at the Memorial is as great or greater today as when the Memorial was dedicated, and the range, if not the exact proportion of the different objects, is the same. Flags, although no longer stored and inventoried, continue to appear in profusion. Military objects are still deposited by Vietnam veterans, and these are supplemented by military objects deposited by post-Vietnam soldiers. Personal items and letters, too, appear as frequently as ever. And many of the recent letters bear criticism of American policy in different parts of the world, particularly Central America, comparing it to the policy that led to war in Vietnam.¹⁹

In the Veterans Memorial, then, we see none of the hegemonic influence that forms the basis for Gusfield and Michalowicz's "manipulative theories" of secular symbolism (1984, pp. 424–27). If the Memorial were

¹⁷This last sentiment reflects the sense of liminality felt by many veterans: they were home from Vietnam, but not "at home." Living an apparently endless, internal Vietnam War, those veterans had strong responses to the Memorial's welcoming message. Maya Lin had stated that she wanted the wall, with its seemingly interminable list of names, to read "like an epic Greek poem" (*National Geographic* 1985, p. 511). Although it was probably the list-drenched war poem, the *Iliad*, that she had in mind, the veterans were transforming the *Iliad* into the *Odyssey*—the story of a man struggling to come home. Throughout the many Veterans Day activities accompanying the Memorial's dedication, the expression "welcome home" was repeated. In fact, "Homecoming" was the official theme of the day.

¹⁸For analysis of these letters, see Palmer (1987) and Carlson and Hocking (1988).

¹⁹Personal communication, Duery Felton, Jr.

in fact a tool of state power, if it were adopted by the state in order to maintain allegiance to an elite and to promote authoritative ways of seeing society (as Haines [1986] suggests), then that tool has not been used very effectively.

CONTEXTS, CONSTITUENCIES, AND MEANING

Effective commemorative tools check ambivalence. The ambivalence attending the Vietnam War, as we have seen, is not suppressed but summarized by the several parts of the Vietnam Memorial's physical makeup. This ambivalence is not necessarily something the individual feels. It is a social fact, an outcome of the incompatible commemorative viewpoints that were held and the measures that were taken by different constituencies. The Memorial is thus a ritual symbol that expresses the contradictions of society.

The Memorial's contradictions not only betray the state's inability to effect a uniform interpretation of the past; they also affirm the nation as a reality whose salience transcends the state. These affirmations are most apparent to those who regard the Memorial naively, who possess no knowledge of the issues that attended its creation.²⁰ Our reading of the letters suggests that the people who came to see the names of their loved ones and comrades on the Memorial's wall pay no attention to its color or placement or to its vertical or horizontal lines. Approaching it from the front, they only see the Lincoln Memorial looming before them, and behind, the Washington Monument. Although Maya Lin deliberately aligned these shrines to the Memorial's wall, she and her admirers hardly mentioned, let alone discussed, them in their efforts to defend her original design. For this reason, and because walls that point nowhere make for aesthetic awkwardness, our impression that this alignment was effected for artistic rather than ideological purposes may be justified. However, it is also our impression that for two years following the Memorial's dedication, the Lincoln and Washington monuments (enveloped by the national atmosphere of the Mall [Griswold 1986]) were functional surrogates for the statue and flag, and in later years were supplements to them, eliciting a moral awareness that a memorial wall alone might have been incapable of inspiring. It is, in fact, the capacity to evoke the surpassing presence of the nation itself (a capacity that the Commission of Fine Arts wanted to see the Vietnam Memorial deprived of) that defines the ultimate, nonnegotiable aspect of the war monument genre. Divested of this national presence, as it would be if placed permanently outside

²⁰ See Ehrenhaus (1989, p. 96) on the distinction between "authentic" and "unauthentic" responses to the Veterans Memorial.

its existing monumental surroundings, the Memorial wall would be experienced differently. It would remain a solemn and affecting monument (as is the wall's portable replica), but against a background of high rises or rolling meadows, against symbols of locality rather than the transcendent reality of the nation, it would become less stirring and magnetic, less sacred. Of this reality the Vietnam Memorial's flag and statue are merely external supports. In a more mundane setting, however, these would be more critical additions to the Memorial than they are in the nation's capital.

The intensive, emotional reaction to the Memorial has superimposed itself upon, but has never replaced other reactions. The Memorial as it is presently constituted by wall, flag, and statue remains a multifocal version of the war monument genre, a version ambiguous enough to accommodate a wide span of commemorative meanings. By interacting with it and interpreting it, different constituencies make this multivocal quality operative. For politicians, the Memorial helps to acquit the nation's overdue debt to its veterans; for artists, it represents a novel combination of symbols and forms; for the veterans, it is an emblem of their rightful place in the nation's political and moral heritage; for families of the dead, it is a shrine linking home and nation; for those who supported the war and defined it as honorable, it is a vindication; for those who opposed the war and defined it as dishonorable, also a vindication; and, for some tourists, the Memorial is merely a place to go.

Attended by all but interpreted in different ways, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial occasions solidarity in the absence of common beliefs. It induces people who think differently to display the same ritual respect toward the soldiers. While some scholars, notably Émile Durkheim (and followers, including David Kertzer [1988]), construe common action rather than common beliefs as the essence of solidarity, there remains a distinction to be drawn between monuments that induce uniform ritual respect without consensus in belief (like the Vietnam Memorial), and monuments that sustain both common belief and uniform ritual respect (like the Revolutionary War and the world war memorials). At stake in this distinction are two different conceptions of the past, two different ways of affectively responding to it, and two different ways of representing it. To consensual monuments goes the task of celebrating the past; to dissensual monuments goes the task of coming to terms with it, of integrating into the collective memory political divisions and military defeat.

Because it takes longer to come to terms with an unsuccessful effort than to rejoice over a successful one, the Veterans Memorial design remains partly open-ended. The most immediate possibility for further change in that design is the addition of a statue to honor women Vietnam

veterans—the nurses.²¹ Explaining the motive for its effort, a spokeswoman for the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project stated: "If you go to the Wall, and see the three fighting men, do you think of the women?" (*Atlanta Constitution*, May 3, 1986, p. A2). This spokeswoman is challenging the claim that the existing monument adequately represents all the Vietnam War's participants. However, difficult obstacles must be overcome before this challenge succeeds.

The first obstacle is the problem of reaching consensus on what a suitable women's memorial should look like. Consensus is so problematic that the jury for the recent (1990) design competition selected two winners—an abstract sculptural form with a water-misting device and a realistic statue of a nurse. The artists, in accordance with jury instructions, are presently working together on a compromise monument.²² The most formidable obstacle, however, is the series of federal agencies that must approve this compromise. Their members will almost certainly disagree on what women accomplished in Vietnam. As Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall (1989) have observed, the ability to think specifically about the significance of women's role in the war has been hindered by the Defense Department, which "pronounced itself unable to arrive at a reasonable estimate of how many women actually went to Vietnam" (p. 348), by disagreements within society about the proper relations of women to war and war commemoration, and by the Commission of Fine Arts, which believes the Memorial's representativeness is broad enough and that any addition to the Veterans Memorial will only encourage more submissions and demands for its further modification.²³

This resistance to the placement on the Memorial's site of a separate marker for women—especially the resistance of the Commission of Fine Arts—must be understood in the context of the emergence of new constituencies actively seeking individual recognition—a reflection perhaps of the peculiarities of our "postmodern" political life, wherein fragmentation of interest groups and recognition of cultural pluralism transform our notions of political enfranchisement and expression.²⁴ But the new

²¹ One of the most recent Vietnam memorials to honor female veterans as well as male veterans was unveiled in Atlanta on Veterans Day, 1988 (*Atlanta Journal* [November 12, 1988], p. 1C). For a useful discussion of the problematic role of women in war memorials, see Inglis (1987).

²² Communication from the Vietnam Women's Memorial Project.

²³ The discouraged admirers of Vietnam's sentry dogs, e.g., are looking elsewhere for their memorial site, but their first preference was a place near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (*Chicago Tribune* [August 2, 1988], p. C5).

²⁴ This postmodern concept of politics is reproduced in the postmodern quality of the Memorial's present design. The realism of its statue stands as a pastiche-like supplement to the abstractness of its wall. Tradition is thus appended to avant garde.

constituencies may also participate in the unfinished nature of the Vietnam War itself, raising the question, Are defeats always “unfinished”? Victories, after all, are to be celebrated; defeats are to be explained, and every explanation, being inherently contestable, is an invitation to continuing debate. This sense of the war’s incompleteness is reproduced, but not resolved, in the incompleteness of the Memorial. Each addition to the Memorial can be read as an attempt at bringing us closer to reconciling ourselves to the war and its participants. However, the reconciliation process diverges along two different paths. One path—the addition of flag and statue—aims at legitimating the cause (perhaps belying our desire to rewrite the story of Vietnam by turning defeat into victory.)²⁵ The other path concerns the participants, with each addition (starting with the women veterans) opening the door to new constituencies demanding special recognition. In both cases, complete reconciliation remains elusive. But if we are right about the Memorial’s articulating rather than concealing the nation’s ambivalence toward the war, then the Memorial’s open-endedness may actually be one of the features that contributes to its salience.

DISCUSSION

This study of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial highlights the broad range of variation presently possible within the war monument genre. Unlike the kinds of monuments that mark popular wars, the Vietnam Memorial underwent frequent changes that both affirmed and modified the traditional conception of the war monument. Starting as a modest plaque, it became a politically sanitized wall sculpture, then a more differentiated memorial that included a flag and a realistic statue. These changes resulted from a political process involving competing claims on how the Vietnam War should be remembered. The process was itself a reflection of contradictory assessments of the war in American society as a whole.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Walter Dean Burnham (1982) observed a fundamental shift in America’s values and self-conception—a “reactionary revitalization movement,” as he called it. However, if this new political climate was conservative, it did not reverse the collective verdict on the Vietnam War. In the fall of 1980, for example, 81% and 86% of veterans and adult nonveterans, respectively, believed that America’s soldiers had become “part of a war that went bad.” Of all adults sampled nationwide in March 1982, 50% believed that the United States never tried to win this war. Three years later, only one-third of a compa-

²⁵ For discussion of the Vietnam War’s reconstitution in film and politics, see Gibson (1989) and McKeever (1989).

rable sample believed that the United States should have tried to win, while more than half, 54%, believed it should not have even sent troops. The American public was very uncertain about the war's purpose. Fifty-seven percent failed to see a clear purpose, and a plurality (45%) of the respondents believed that most of the South Vietnamese people did not care which side won the war. By a two-to-one margin, Americans in the mid-1980s believed that the United States should have left Vietnam earlier than it did (Harris 1980; *Washington Post* 1982, 1985*a*, 1985*b*; *Los Angeles Times* 1985. For detail, see MacPherson [1984]).

That the attitudes expressed in the mid-1980s are essentially similar to those prevailing during the early 1980s, when plans to commemorate the Vietnam veterans were realized, is a safe assumption. The impetus for building a monument to these men and the warmth with which that monument was received by the people could not have resulted from a new, positive consensus on the war. This case thus suggests an alternative to Durkheim's focus on moral unity as the ultimate object of commemoration. Durkheim believed that people engage in commemoration in order to remain faithful to the past, but he was not thinking about any part of the past, only that which is appealing and heroic. When people remember in this way, he said (1965, p. 420), their belief in the goodness of their society becomes stronger: "The glorious souvenirs which are made to live again before their eyes, and with which they feel that they have a kinship, give them a feeling of strength and confidence: a man is surer of his faith when he sees to how distant a past it goes back and what great things it has inspired." When a nation or community is in full agreement about the virtue of some previous cause or collective achievement, then heroic monuments do become plausible as objects of ritual and dedication. But when the value of a cause and its achievements is less certain, when its "souvenirs" are less than "glorious," then a different commemoration is conceived, one that induces more sober reflection than enthusiastic uplift, more recognition of losses than celebration of gains.²⁶

Our analysis of this process has turned on the way genre enters into the act of commemoration. Although Griswold (1987*a*, p. 18) is undoubtedly right in her belief that genres admit of no "Aristotelian fixity," we have identified constraints on how far a genre can change before it is no longer itself, as well as how far it must change in order to commemorate its object credibly. A relatively fixed idea about what war monuments should look like and a realization that the Vietnam War was, at best, a

²⁶ For two studies that regard collective memory from a standpoint situated "beyond the pleasure principle," see Schwartz, Zerubavel, and Barnett (1986) and Schudson (1989, pp. 109–11). See also Schwartz (1982, pp. 392–94).

controversial one—these two conceptions pushed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in two opposite directions. The traditional conception of war memorials, unopposed by any other consideration, would have led to the creation of a device that celebrated martial heroism in the service of a national cause. From this heroic ideal, no specific design can be inferred; however, those who opposed the first version of the Vietnam Memorial had a clear sense of what they wanted. They designated a cluster of features that all proper war memorials must, in some degree, display: a statement engraved on the monument describing the cause for which it was built, realism of human representation, vertical preeminence, lightness of color, grandness of size, and conspicuous national and military symbolism. No monument needs to incorporate all these features, or even a set combination of them, to qualify as a war memorial; however, at least some items from this cluster seem to be required, and some were indeed used to embellish Maya Lin's minimalist design. The addition of a marker identifying the Memorial wall as a monument to the Vietnam War dead and the addition of a national flag and a realistic statue pulled the initial design in the direction of the traditional war memorial genre.

However, none of these additions was unproblematically heroic; none represented an unproblematic cause. Each addition, as we have documented, contained its own internal qualifications, and these qualifications betray the appeal of the minimal memorial. Deliberately avoiding literal description and realistic representation, cast along modest, horizontal lines free of patriotic symbolism, the minimal war memorial expressly avoids the portrayal of war as a sacred undertaking. Thus, if the image of the traditional war memorial set into motion powerful forces to modify the original Vietnam Memorial design, the reality of the Vietnam War—an undeclared defeat about which the nation was divided—set into motion equally powerful forces to assure that this modification would not go too far.

These two imperatives, one contributing to the development of a traditional monument, the other, to a nontraditional one, worked themselves out in a social context that amplified their tension and their effects and intensified the genre problem. The favorable reception of the nontraditional monument was secured by a public opinion that had come to regard the war as a mistake. In contrast, the appeal of the traditionalized monument derived from a variety of other changes in the political atmosphere, particularly the great conservative awakening of the early 1980s, the growing appreciation of how much the veterans had sacrificed for their country, and the increasing reliance of all political actors on constituency-based interest group activity, which enabled them to exploit the most negotiable aspects of the commemorative genre problem. At

every point in the Vietnam Memorial's development, then, opportunities for change in commemorative form were accompanied by constraints on change. Out of this dynamic field emerged the Vietnam Memorial itself: heroic, but not exultant; acknowledging a cause, but not proclaiming it.

Social Reproductions

The most successful cultural objects reproduce themselves. Their images reappear across the social and physical landscape, varying enough to permit local incarnations but always retaining some essential elements of the original. In the case of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, this reproduction process has been swift and vigorous. A replica of the Memorial wall is currently traversing the country and is booked beyond 1992. It is an exact, half-scale copy of the original, made of aluminum panels coated with black enamel. The names are raised, in order that they may be touched and pencil rubbings made. The objects left at this "Moving Wall" are gathered up for storage and display at a Moving Wall Museum planned for Santa Fe, New Mexico. Like the original Vietnam Veterans Memorial, this wall also has its moral entrepreneur, a veteran named John Devitt who conceived his mission while visiting the original. Of that Memorial, Devitt (echoing Jan Scruggs) declared: "It's not a statement about war, it's a statement about sacrifice and service (*New York Times*, August 1989, p. 31). Both men, Scruggs and Devitt, evidently had the same idea: to elevate the participant but ignore his cause.

The vast popularity of both the Moving Wall and the Veterans Memorial in Washington suggests that the original design reflects tensions over the Vietnam War that are general in society rather than peculiar to a given set of artists, art critics, and political action groups. Such a general condition is also evidenced in the readiness with which different state and local authorities have brought the Veterans Memorial into their own efforts to commemorate the Vietnam War. Local monuments, like their Washington prototype, superimpose elements of the traditional war monument genre on a nontraditional, minimalist design. Variant combinations of these two forms appear in many cities, including Junction City, Kansas, whose memorial consists of a wall engraved with a list of names and a portrayal of part of the Frederick Hart statue; in Hartwell, Georgia, where two memorial walls—one bearing the names of the six local men who died; the other a variant of the Hart statue—are separated by a broken letter "V" designed to symbolize "broken dreams, promises, and plans." A similar pattern appears in the Springfield, Illinois, memorial, situated near Lincoln's Tomb and consisting of two intersecting walls forming a cross, engraved with names, military insignia, service anthems, and surmounted by flags and an eternal flame; in the Kansas

City Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fountain, combining a name-covered wall and a system of pools symbolizing different aspects of both the war and the people's reaction to it; in the New York City memorial, which replaces the name list with a display of written correspondence showing directly the support and opposition to the war expressed by soldiers before they died; in the Disabled American Veterans Vietnam National Memorial in Eagle's Nest, New Mexico, with its arrangement of names and photographs. Asserting the same principle—the priority of the participant over the cause—these different monuments stand as collective representations of the Vietnam War's significance.²⁷

Yet, the salience of participant and cause, individual and national effort, is variable. In Springfield, emblems of national effort are most evident, in New York, least so. The establishment throughout the United States of minimalist memorial forms differentially qualified by elements of the traditional genre show that there are aspects of commemoration that are not shared, yet are still objects of collective representation.

If the Moving Wall and the local Vietnam monuments are seen as "first cousins" to the original Vietnam Veterans Memorial, then its "second cousin" must be the proposed Korean War Veterans Memorial. The affinity between the Vietnam and Korea shrines can be described in terms of two axes along which American wars vary, namely, their justification (weak vs. strong) and outcome (victory vs. defeat).²⁸ Many Americans judge the Vietnam War negatively on both counts.²⁹ The Korean War, judged as neither a victory nor a defeat, neither weak nor strong in

²⁷ Combining traditional and abstract elements, these memorials constitute a small but representative sample of many similar Vietnam War memorials that have been erected throughout the United States. (Personal communication from the late Margaret Donovan of Washington, D.C. At the time of her death, Ms. Donovan was undertaking research for *The Forgotten Warriors: A Directory of Korean and Vietnam War Memorials and Museums*. Inquiries about this partially completed project may be directed to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Collection, Museum and Archaeological Regional Storage Facility, Lanham, Maryland 20706).

²⁸ American wars deemed just in motive and victorious in outcome include the Revolutionary War and the two world wars. Into this same category, most Northerners would place the Civil War. Generally regarded as victories but condemned by many contemporaries and succeeding generations as having been waged for dubious moral and political reasons are the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Indian Wars, and the Spanish-American War. The single war that was nobly, but unsuccessfully, fought was the Civil War, as perceived by Southerners. To these different categories of war correspond different volumes and different qualities of commemoration (Mayo 1988).

²⁹ These judgments and their inhibiting effect on the creation of traditional commemorative devices are more vividly realized in post-World War II Germany than in post-Vietnam War America. Unlike America's, Germany's defeat was literally shattering; its cause regarded as not merely misguided (as many perceived America's to have been in Vietnam), but evil in conception and act; its memories borne in a silence deeper than America has ever known.

justification, resembles the Vietnam War in its lack of positive military or moral qualities. The two wars also share a relatively long gap between the time of their official termination and the time a major war memorial was planned for them in the nation's capital, an adjacent location on the capital mall, and a symbolic structure that is, in many respects, similar.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Korean War Veterans Memorial are different monuments, promoted by sponsors appealing to different constituencies; yet, they emerge out of the same ambivalent culture of commemoration. Reflecting the tension between realism and abstraction, expressiveness and restraint, each monument is a compromise between different views on how its war should be remembered and what a memorial to it should include. The Korean Memorial's structure, as originally conceived, incorporated traditional elements, including realistic images of soldiers, but these were tentatively rendered—they were “ghostly,” as one of the designers put it.³⁰ Rival designers modified this original model in two ways: (1) by making the soldiers lifelike and portraying them in a combat situation and (2) by proposing a less conspicuous memorial site. The monument-selection commission rejected the first modification but embraced the second, thus deciding against a traditional, heroic-size memorial to the Korean War. To be sure, the commission jury (made up of veterans of Korea) views the war's accomplishments more positively than the general public and it endorsed every one of the designers' traditional elements, including statues, flag, and identifying inscription.³¹ The jury qualified its commemoration of the Korean War as an American war, however, by approving the listing of all 21 combatant nations, even though non-American foreign forces in Korea were token forces. Also, it approved an engraved numerical count of participants and casualties and agreed to name the monument for the veterans who fought the war rather than for the war itself. Thus, the elevation of the soldier and deemphasis of his cause are less dramatic in the Korean Memorial than in the Vietnam Memorial, but they are nevertheless apparent in its present design. When established on the mall, this design will, in turn, accentuate two of the Vietnam Memorial's taken-for-granted features: its honoring of men who died in a restrained “police action” rather than an officially declared war and its marking the high point, in lives lost, of the late 20th-century Cold War in Asia.

It is also our sense that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial's successful separation of participant and cause and its attendant elevation of the

³⁰ Personal communication from Donald A. Leon of Pennsylvania State University.

³¹ Images of the Korean War participants, including women, will be engraved on the Memorial's walls (partly in anticipation of future demands for their inclusion). Personal Communication from Robert Hansen, Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board.

participant, affected, in a way that was actually preemptive, the public sentiments and symbols of the Persian Gulf War. The profusion of yellow ribbons preceded the displays of U.S. flags and, in sheer number and points of display, predominated. The ribbons were precisely about the troops, individuals all, and were specifically focused on the troops' coming home. The U.S. flags, more directly linked to the nation and the cause, were often secondary and only proliferated toward the end of the war, that is, when the end was a sure and imminent thing.

THE PRODUCTION OF COMMEMORATIVE MEANING

We cannot anticipate the public's reaction to monuments that will be dedicated to the apparently prestigious Persian Gulf War. We can only affirm that the least prestigious war in American history, the war fought and remembered with the most controversy, is precisely the one whose monument is most revered and most often visited. This essential fact must be incorporated into any effort to theorize our understanding of the Vietnam Memorial. As we outlined it in our introduction, the development of a thick description of the Vietnam Memorial involved the disclosure of relevant social, political, and cultural processes. These processes were, in their substance, interactive: moral entrepreneurs interacting with their constituencies and with political and cultural authorities; politicians interacting with their colleagues and within a conservative social climate, veterans interacting with their memories and their current situations; artists interacting with politically forged competition guidelines, with denizens of the art world and with lay audiences; visitors interacting with the wall. The key to the Memorial's multifold meaning lies in this interaction web. The Memorial's ability to bring off commemoration of a dark and controversial part of the past comes to rest on the surrounding society's interaction with the Memorial itself. Whatever processes brought this cultural object into being in the first place, it is the use made of it that brings it into the life of the society. Wendy Griswold, in her outline of a model for analyzing cultural objects, notes that meaning is produced by the interaction between "the symbolic capacities of the object itself and the perceptual apparatus of those who experience the object" (1987*b*, p. 1079). We have come to understand the complex evolution of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in the same way: as a succession of interacting producers, sponsors, and audiences.

Given our effort to discover the various meanings of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, we have come to appreciate the distinctions that Victor Turner (1967, pp. 19–47) made in his own analysis of symbolic devices. Turner, in this connection, identified three levels of meaning. "Exegetical meaning" is expressed in what people say about a given symbol;

“positional meaning” is the relation of one symbol to others in a broader semiotic system; and “operational meaning” is expressed in the way the symbol is used. It is the last, the operational, meaning that most strikingly draws our attention at the end of this article. For, to a large extent, we read the Vietnam Veterans Memorial through its uses. Ironically, the memorial designed to be least visible has become the most visible because its users have opened up its spaces and extended them outward. They have done this by the depositing of items at the wall, by the creation of a vast facility for their storage and their display, by the addition to the original site of a flag and statue, by the devising of a Moving Wall, and by the establishment in cities across the land of Vietnam War Memorials that resemble the Washington prototype. In his paper on the Warsaw Ghetto Monument, James E. Young recalls Robert Musil’s statement that “there is nothing in this world as invisible as a monument. They are no doubt erected to be seen—indeed, to attract attention. But at the same time they are impregnated with something that repels attention” (1989, p. 71). Perhaps the Vietnam Veterans Memorial’s enduring visibility has something to do with its unfinished, constantly moving and expanding form. And perhaps the appeal of its commemoration without victory or consensus is also linked to its mutability—not necessarily in anyone’s intention but in the tendency of the collective processes that created it.

That the Vietnam Memorial itself is deemed a sacred site and is an object of frequent ritual also conforms to our assumption that the paramount source of its meaning is operational. The rituals that take place there, however, are not the kind Durkheim would have understood. These are not rituals that strengthen common sentiments by bringing together those who hold them and putting them into closer and more active relations with one another (1965, p. 241). We are dealing with ritual assemblies that are intense even though, or perhaps because, the volume of common thoughts and sentiments about their object is so sparse. In studying the Vietnam Memorial, we have come to believe that people may need more ritual to face a painful and controversial part of the past than to deal with a painful part of the past about whose cause and meaning there is agreement. Rituals, however, do not resolve historical controversies; they only articulate them, making their memory public and dramatic. Unable to convince one another about what went wrong in Vietnam, therefore, the men and women who assemble at the Vietnam Memorial do so with more gravity than is displayed at shrines commemorating any other war.

In the end, contexts and meanings change. A day will come when the names that appear on the Vietnam Memorial’s wall are known to few living persons. On this day, the intensity of feeling evoked by the wall

will be less acute; the flags and objects that decorate the wall will be less dense; the solemnity that now grips those who enter the Memorial site will be diluted by an air of casualness; the ritual relation that now links shrine and pilgrim will become a mundane relation that links attraction and tourist. On this day, the Vietnam War will have become a less fitful part of American history. But the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, its several parts continuing to reflect different aspects of and beliefs about the war, will echo the ambivalence with which that war was first commemorated.

REFERENCES

- Barber, Bernard. 1972. "Place, Symbol and the Utilitarian Function in War Memorials." Pp. 327-34 in *People and Buildings*, edited by Robert Gutman. New York: Basic.
- Burnham, Walter Dean. 1982. *The Current Crisis in American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Carlson, A. Cheree, and John Hocking. 1988. "Strategies of Redemption at The Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 52:203-15.
- Durkheim, Émile. 1965. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.
- Ehrenhaus, Peter. 1988. "Silence and Symbolic Expression." *Communication Monographs* 55:41-57.
- . 1989. "The Wall." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6:94-98.
- Foss, Sonia. 1986. "Ambiguity as Persuasion: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Communication Quarterly* 34:326-40.
- Fox, Terrance M. 1989. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Ideological Implications." Pp. 211-20 in *Vietnam Images: War and Representation*, edited by Jeffrey Walsh and James Aulich. New York: St. Martin's.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic.
- Gibson, James W. 1989. "American Paramilitary Culture and the Reconstitution of the Vietnam War." Pp. 10-42 in *Vietnam Images: War and Representation*, edited by Jeffrey Walsh and James Aulich. New York: St. Martin's.
- Goldmann, Lucien. 1964. *The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Greenblatt, S. 1983. "Murdering Peasants: Status, Genre and the Representation of Rebellion." *Representations* 1:1-29.
- Griswold, Charles L. 1986. "The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Washington Mall: Philosophical Thoughts on Political Iconography." *Critical Inquiry* 12: 688-719.
- Griswold, Wendy. 1987a. "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture." Pp. 1-35 in *Sociological Methodology*, vol. 17. Edited by Clifford Clogg. Washington, D.C.: American Sociological Association.
- . 1987b. "The Fabrication of Literary Meaning." *American Journal of Sociology* 92:1077-1117.
- Gusfield, Joseph, and Jerzy Michalowicz. 1984. "Secular Symbolism: Studies of Ritual, Ceremony, and the Symbolic Order in Modern Life." Pp. 417-35 in *Annual Review of Sociology*, edited by Ralph Turner. Palo Alto, Calif.: Annual Reviews.
- Haines, Harry W. 1986. "What Kind of War: An Analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 3:1-20.

- Halbwachs, Maurice. 1941. *La topographie légendaire des évangiles*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- . (1950) 1980. *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Harris, Louis. 1980. *ABC News Harris Survey*. November 10.
- Hertz, Robert. 1965. *Death and the Right Hand*. London: Black.
- Hess, Elizabeth. 1983. "A Tale of Two Memorials." *Art in America* (April), pp. 121–26.
- Inglis, Ken. "Men, Women and War Memorials: Anzac Australia." *Daedalus* 116: 35–59.
- Jeffords, Susan. 1988. "Things Worth Dying For: Gender and the Ideology of Collectivity in Vietnam Representation." *Cultural Critique* (Winter 1987–88): 79–103.
- Johnson, Loch. 1976. "Political Alienation among Vietnam Veterans." *Western Political Quarterly* 29:398–410.
- . 1980. "Scars of War: Alienation and Estrangement among Wounded Vietnam Veterans." Pp. 213–27 in *Strangers at Home*, edited by Charles R. Figley and Seymour Leventman. New York: Praeger.
- Kertzer, David. 1988. *Ritual, Politics, and Power*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Los Angeles Times*. 1985. *Los Angeles Times Survey*. April 26.
- Lowenthal, David. 1985. *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacPherson, Myra. 1984. *Long Time Passing*. New York: Doubleday.
- Marling, Karal Ann, and John Wetenhall. 1989. "The Sexual Politics of Memory: The Vietnam Women's Memorial Project and 'The Wall.'" *Prospects* 14:341–72.
- McKeever, Robert J. 1989. "American Myths and the Impact of the Vietnam War: Revisionism in Foreign Policy and Popular Cinema in the 1980s." Pp. 43–56 in *Vietnam Images: War and Representation*, edited by Jeffrey Walsh and James Aulich. New York: St. Martin's.
- Mason, Bobbie Ann. 1985. *In Country*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Mayo, James M. 1988. *War Memorials as Political Landscape: The American Experience and Beyond*. New York: Praeger.
- Ortner, Sherry B. 1974. "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" Pp. 67–87 in *Women, Culture and Society*, edited by Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Palmer, Laura. 1987. *Shrapnel in the Heart: Letters and Remembrances from the Vietnam Memorial*. New York: Random House.
- Schmitt, Raymond L. 1989. "Sharing the Holocaust: Bitburg as Emotional Reminder." *Symbolic Interaction* 10:239–98.
- Schudson, Michael. 1989. "The Present in the Past versus the Past in the Present." *Communication* 11:105–13.
- Schwartz, Barry. 1982. "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory." *Social Forces* 61:374–402.
- Schwartz, Barry, Yael Zerubavel, and Bernice Barnett. 1986. "The Recovery of Masada." *Sociological Quarterly* 27:147–68.
- Scruggs, Jan C., and Joel L. Swerdlow. 1985. *To Heal a Nation: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Shils, Edward. 1981. *Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shils, Edward, and Michael Young. 1953. "The Meaning of the Coronation." *Sociological Review* 1:63–81.
- Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- U.S. House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. 1981. *Legacies of Vietnam: Comparative Adjustment of Veterans and Their Peers*. Report no. 14. March 9. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.

- U.S. House of Representatives. 1979. *Congressional Record*. May 24. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.
- . 1982. *Congressional Record*. December 13. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Senate. 1980. *Congressional Record*. April 30. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office.
- Warner, W. Lloyd. 1959. *The Living and the Dead*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Washington Post. 1982. *ABC News/Washington Post*. March 23.
- . 1985a. *ABC News/Washington Post*. February 22.
- . 1985b. *ABC News/Washington Post*. March 25.
- Wheeler, John. 1984. *Touched with Fire: The Future of the Vietnam Generation*. New York: Avon.
- Young, James E. 1989. "The Biography of a Memorial Icon: Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument." *Representations* 26:69–106.