

“A War, Once Started”: Feminism, Marxism, and the Dialectics of Destruction

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“A war, once started, grows from infancy to assume a life of its own—one so terrible that even the parents who spawned it can no longer claim it for their own.”

—Le Ly Hayslip,
When Heaven and Earth Changed Places

A crucial assumption informing the instigation of the Iraq War was that war itself is containable, both militarily and conceptually: the U.S. military could invade the country, identify the enemies, defeat them, and then support sympathetic friends in a new “democratic” government. Of course, these have proved to be false assumptions: the U.S. quickly subdued the regular Iraqi military, but has not been able to end armed resistance to the occupation. The defeat of the identified enemy has also entailed the killing of tens of thousands of non-combatants, despite boasts that modern technology enables “surgical strikes” that endanger only “military targets.” More troubling than military arrogance, however, is the false notion—which also obtains in Afghanistan—that the enemy is readily separable from the rest of the population, that if we can just kill the “terrorists,” then we will win the war. The assumption is, then, that we can kill political (or economic) opposition by killing those individuals in opposition, especially those who would fight. The absurdity of this assumption is that it forgets that acquaintances, friends, relatives, and even spouses can hold conflicting political views and that to kill someone is to kill someone’s child, spouse, relative, fellow native, etc.; Killing tends to beget a vicious cycle of outrage and revenge, not the end of killing. Moreover, political and economic views, and sentiments of all kinds, do not die with individuals. The tragic irony here is that the Vietnam War had already demonstrated the bankruptcy of these assumptions on—so far—a grander scale.

In the U.S., World War II has given credence to the assumption that war,¹ both as a means to accomplish something and as a practice, is controllable and containable. Though on a global scale that war was far more devastating than its initial perpetrators envisioned—forty to fifty million deaths, to name only one measure—

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most Americans now see it simply as a fight against dictators. Particularly in the era of *The Greatest Generation*, *Band of Brothers*, and *Saving Private Ryan*, the war is seen as an instrument for the greater good, a necessary task accomplished with honor. It has come to sanction war in general, and leaders invoke it in one form or another to justify military actions of all kinds. The comparison of Saddam Hussein with Hitler is only the most obvious example.

Yet in the immediate aftermath of World War II, not all Americans saw it as “the good war.” In 1946, veteran Edgar L. Jones worried that civilians supporting the defense buildup that would come to be known as the Cold War did not understand how destructive the conflict had been. He described the naiveté of American exceptionalism, with its “holier-than-thou attitude toward other nations,” and then asked:

What kind of war do civilians suppose we fought anyway? We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers. We topped off our saturation bombing and burning of enemy civilians by dropping atomic bombs on two nearly defenseless cities, thereby setting the alltime record for instantaneous mass slaughter (49).²

Jones’s point was not that the U.S. military was particularly brutal, but that all war is brutal: “we fought a dishonorable war, because morality had a low priority in battle.” In other words, the character of war in general is vicious, indiscriminate destruction that is neither honorable, nor predictably instrumental.

The direct effects of this destruction on human (and animal) bodies—death, wounding, permanent disabling, mutilation, and rape—can be tallied to some extent. We can also measure the loss of homes, means of subsistence, and the built environment and all the damage that these losses wreak on societies. The destruction of nature is also at least theoretically quantifiable, despite the fact that longterm effects can be hard to calculate. While psychological damage can be deep and affect both victims and perpetrators—and those close to them—we increasingly understand that it exists and can be as devastating as physical injury. Also largely quantifiable is the indirect damage to a society that commits its resources towards destruction instead of towards the welfare of its members. Money spent on what is called defense is not spent on health care, for example.

Yet there are phenomena associated with war that resist quantification and are more difficult to analyze using standard cause and effect methodology. Witnesses to war often describe its destruction as an “unleashing” of uncontrollable forces that exceed any war’s intended purposes and rules of conduct. The destruction is not simply a set of actions but also a condition or atmosphere that breeds more destruction. In short, war unleashes effects that are unpredictable by “Western” enlightenment rationality. Let me quickly say

that my interest in pointing to the limits of enlightenment rationality is not to say that war is ultimately incomprehensible; on the contrary, the recognition that its destruction eludes even our abilities to explain it is powerful evidence for the necessity of peace. If the worse tendency of post-structuralist thought is to despair of rational understanding and analysis—to emphasize the “undecidability” or indeterminacy of rationality—my goal is the opposite: to show that the most complete possible understanding of war forces us to acknowledge that it exceeds precise analysis. Yet, this very acknowledgment leads us to understand that the unpredictable destruction in war is predictable. Thus, the chief impediment to understanding and preventing war is not rationality so much as instrumental rationality, the belief that causes and effects are discrete and self-evident, the kind of thinking that has governed both the Iraq war and arguably any “good” war.

The analysis of enlightenment rationality in Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* helps us understand the limits of rationality without abandoning it. The central dialectic in Adorno and Horkheimer is the relationship between enlightenment and myth. Enlightenment has meant, “the disenchantment of the world; the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy” (3); enlightenment rationality makes possible the freeing of humanity from superstition and from much of its miserable labor. Yet, they argue that the historical course of enlightenment has been towards “domination”; humans have been increasing imprisoned by instrumentality, the chaining of life, and how we think about it, to the imperatives of capital accumulation. Thought itself has become positivism, reason reduced to all or nothing explanations in which contradiction is rendered anathema. In contrast, Horkheimer and Adorno’s dialectical thinking recognizes that rational explanation can never be fully adequate to what it would explain, that there is always the “incommensurable,” the “unassignable,” or as Adorno would later call it in *Negative Dialectics*, a “remainder.” Their great insight is that “explanations of the world as all or nothing are mythologies” themselves. Yet, Horkheimer and Adorno distinguish their recognition of the limits of rationality from the “romantic enemies of enlightenment,” who would mistakenly confuse “analytic method” and “reflective thought” with positivism.³ The target of their criticism is an instrumental rationality that cannot accommodate contradiction or “remainder.”

Working through a dialectic similar to Horkheimer and Adorno’s, I will look at the destruction of war as it is described in numerous texts both fictional and non-fictional. On the one hand, I will examine the explanations of this destruction produced by the rational explanatory discourses of the Marxist and materialist feminist traditions, while pointing to their limits; on the other hand, I will examine explanations offered by sources that Horkheimer and Adorno would call mythical, including some residual notions that are more cosmological in character, including notions of evil, vampirism, and yin-yang, among others.⁴ At stake is a more complete understanding of war’s effects, which in turn becomes an interrogation of whether or not war can be a means to justice.

Atrocities are prime examples of the “unleashing” of destruction phenomenon. On the one hand, they are predictable to some extent and can even become strategic military policy. As Edgar Jones articulated so clearly, the character of war itself is, in one sense, atrocity. If the air wars against the civilians of North Vietnam, Coventry, or Dresden can be seen as atrocities, they are committed impersonally, at the level of policy. However, what we more commonly call atrocities, discrete acts in which perpetrators are in direct contact with victims, cannot be so impersonal; they combine policy with the more unpredictable unleashing of intimate slaughter.⁵ Nevertheless, specific conditions make atrocities more likely, such as when one or both sides see the enemy as subhuman, often as racially inferior.⁶ Military training and national propaganda campaigns often encourage racism in order to facilitate both killing and broad participation in domestic economic mobilization. Citizens and soldiers convinced that the enemy is a subhuman threat can be manipulated into perpetrating or supporting extraordinary violence. Citing Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* as an apt portrait, Glenn Gray observed that “the war against Japan was particularly revolting . . . because the image of the enemy, apparently on both sides, was so far removed from reality” (152). James Jones’s *The Thin Red Line* alludes to the racist public relations campaign against Japan in the U.S.: in the midst of hand-to-hand fighting with a Japanese soldier who has surprised him while defecating, Private Bead notices that the soldier does not resemble the caricatures he has seen in the U.S. media.⁷ As both Gray and David Grossman point out, any factor that psychologically distances soldiers from those they would kill makes killing easier. Since the anticipation of guilt is a check on brutality, relieving guilt in advance—even if only temporarily—fuels atrocities.

Rape is a form of atrocity that has only recently been widely acknowledged as such. In the introduction to his 2007 study of rape committed by U.S. troops in World War II Europe, Robert Lilly remarks that he could not get the work published in the U.S. in the early 2000s because it contradicted the nostalgia for the “good war” epitomized by “The Greatest Generation” narrative. Moreover, the run up to the Iraq War was underway and any study pointing to war’s “ugly underbelly” was unwelcome in the face of cynical patriotism (13). However, feminist analysts have not let temporary enthusiasms for war deter them; the history of the “comfort women,” the martial rapes in Bosnia, those by the Red Army in World War II, and Lilly’s work, among others have served to debunk the idea that any war could be good or clean.

Though some rape may be endemic to war, regularized mass raping is usually strategic policy. The “comfort women,” sex slaves of the Japanese military, were seen by high ranking officials as necessary to the conduct of the war, satisfying the purported sexual desires of the men while further dehumanizing conquered peoples.⁸ Thereby Japanese racial superiority was confirmed by their abuse of supposed inferiors, which justified further conquests.⁹ The Soviet Army rapes in East Prussia near the end of World War II represent a different circumstance: they were seen as vengeance against an evil enemy, another form of aggression in a theater of war remarkable

for its savagery. Yet as Lilly points out, while rape was tacitly accepted by the Soviet government—ostensibly as a reward for soldiers who had fought in conditions of great privation—the instances of mass rapes varied with different army units. Apparently, not all commanders condoned it, which suggests that military authority, not simply impulse, is a crucial factor in mass rapes (23). The same could be said for the atrocities in Bosnia in the 1990s. Though a kind of atavistic ethnic nationalism is often blamed for the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the transition from neighbor to rapist is a social process. Cynthia Enloe notes that it is critical to investigate “how ethnicity gets converted into nationalist consciousness, how consciousness becomes organized . . . how organized nationalism becomes militarized,” and how militarization manifests itself as martial rape, because “none of these transformations is automatic” (101). One place to begin that analysis would be with the debilitating “structural adjustment” visited on the former Yugoslavia by the International Monetary Fund, which forcibly shifted economic production to debt repayment, thereby impoverishing the region. That analysis could combine feminist and Marxist approaches, a point to which I will return. The key here is that rape became a strategy generated from above—but carried out from below.

To digress briefly, I would note that Enloe’s observation is also important because it complicates any argument that rape, or war for that matter, are regrettable but intrinsic aspects of human nature. It is obvious that humans are capable of extraordinary viciousness. It is also obvious that war of some kind has been a recurring feature of human society. However, war has not been the only condition of humanity, and in fact, mass mechanized war between nation states has been endemic to the capitalist epoch in particular. Though technology makes it conceivable that armed conflict over resources is no longer necessary, the imperatives of capital accumulation and the competition between national capitals have produced war on a massive scale.

Some will counter that human nature will never allow for a better world. Yet modern wars require massive propaganda campaigns, the crushing of dissent, and the drafting and recruiting of young people at impressionable ages. In fact, there is more evidence that human nature must be thwarted to conduct modern war. In *On Killing*, Grossman shows that behaviorist psychological techniques now inform military training because the vast majority of people, ninety-eight percent, are powerfully averse to killing other humans. Even the claim that an atavistic fear of the Other spawns so-called “ethnic” wars cannot explain why careful and prolonged ideological campaigns—such as the Nazis’—must be waged to demonize so-called enemies—ethnic, political, or otherwise. Humans may instinctively fear what they do not know or understand, but their “natural” response is not to carpet bomb peasant agricultural societies or to construct elaborate death camps. More likely is that a critical number of people are convinced by those in power that bombing villages on the other side of the world will both make them safe and rid the world of particular evildoers—a modern myth forged not by ancient experience but by cynicism. Those who would main-

tain that war can be clean and precisely instrumental are often the same who would claim that it is a product of human nature.

Yet for all its rootedness in specifiable social processes, there remains an aspect of atrocity less well understood. The My Lai massacre in Vietnam, perhaps the most famous example of U.S. military atrocity, represents a paradigmatic combination of policy and the “unleashing” of extraordinary violence on the part of a particular military unit. The U.S. strategy in Vietnam was to produce “body counts”—to kill the “enemy”, not to take territory—which lent itself to civilian deaths, especially in the areas of Vietnam, like My Lai, where there was effectively no support for the U.S. or the government in Saigon it financed and controlled—where the difference between civilians and combatants was nearly indistinguishable. That soldiers were wounded or killed every day by sniper fire or landmines further made conditions ripe for atrocity. (In fact, similar conditions in other wars have resulted in the regular killing of civilians, including the current war in Iraq.)¹⁰ Moreover, troops were trained to see the Vietnamese as subhuman “gooks” whose lives had no value. Yet the intimacy of the slaughter of the villagers was felt by witnesses, and later by some of the perpetrators, to be more than mere policy in action.

My Lai was thought by the U.S. military to harbor “Viet Cong” soldiers, and a platoon led by Lt. William Calley was sent in to find them. Instead, several hundred civilians were killed. As Seymour Hersh reported, after entering the village, troops began to “systematically ransack the hamlet and slaughter the people, kill the livestock and destroy the crops. Men poured rifle and machine-gun fire into huts without knowing—or seemingly caring—who was inside” (414). One soldier testified, “We were all psyched up, and as a result, when we got there the shooting started almost as a chain reaction. [. . .] First we saw a few men running . . . and the next thing we knew we were shooting at everything. Everybody was just firing. After they got in the village, I guess you could say that the men were out of control” (qtd. in Hersh, 414).

Tim O’Brien renders the massacre in fiction in his 1994 novel *In the Lake of the Woods*, which includes documentary material from the My Lai testimony.¹¹ Having himself served in “Pinkville,” as this area of Vietnam was called by the U.S. military,¹² O’Brien describes the killers’ state of mind, which his narrator characterizes as “rage, in part, but it was also illness and sorrow and evil, all kinds of things” (40). During the massacre, the main character, nicknamed “Sorcerer,” observes the scene: “PFC Weatherby was killing whatever he could kill . . . Hutto was shooting corpses. T’Souvas was shooting children. Doherty and Terry were finishing off the wounded. This was not madness, Sorcerer understood. This was sin. He felt it winding through his own arteries, something vile and slippery like heavy black oil in a crankcase” (108-9). As a My Lai vet was later to say, “when you look back at things that happened, things that transpired, things you did, you say: Why? Why did I do that? That is not me. Something happened to me” (qtd. in O’Brien, 262). Note the seeming dissociation from responsibility in the words “the next thing we knew” and “something happened to me.” The inability to explain

their participation is common to perpetrators of atrocities, yet they often live with guilt, suggesting that the dissociation is temporary and the damage done is not just to victims. For Sorcerer, the atrocity leaves the realm of policy and becomes something evil, a "sin."

This inability to explain exactly why atrocity happens in particular instances is not limited to the participants. Grossman defines atrocities quite carefully and gives a thorough accounting of the factors making them more likely. Yet when he has to explain why they happen, and why otherwise ordinary, non-sociopathic men commit them, he, like O'Brien's Sorcerer, has to change explanatory registers. That section of *On Killing* is entitled, "The Dark Power of Atrocity" (203). A strategic policy that depends on atrocity becomes "a Faustian bargain with evil," in which "there are no half measures when one sells one's soul" (222, 227). The best he can explain it is use "the analogy of a satanic pact" (210). His analytic framework thus moves from behavioral psychology—a field often given to the worst instrumental reasoning—to myth, legend, and the Old Testament. Yet it is hard to see this simply as a breakdown in his thinking; rather, he reaches the point where the phenomenon he describes has an element that exceeds our rational abilities to explain it.¹³

We see a similar conceptual difficulty for writers trying to account for the damage a war does to society in general. This is inherently a difficult problem to describe because the object of analysis, a society or a nation, is less easily specified than the notion atrocity. Not surprisingly, some of the best descriptions of this society-wide giving over to the "unleashing" of destruction are fictional.¹⁴ Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker* combines a kind of Marxist analysis of World War II with a moral, cosmological one. The novel chronicles the experiences of a rural Kentucky family that moves to the Detroit area to work in the wartime defense industries. Soon after their arrival in the city, Gertie Nevels, the principal character and mother of the family, learns from another worker that the purpose of defense work is not to win the war, but to "mak[e] more cost plus" (154). "Cost plus" refers to the government contracts awarded to corporations that guaranteed a percentage of profit above costs. These terms encouraged defense contractors to drive up costs, since the higher the cost, the higher the profits. As the novel observes several times, working people raise their children to die in the war, while the elite simultaneously profit off their labor. This exchange can be calculated by lives lost, profits, stockholder dividends, and other measures.

Yet the workers are earning unprecedented wages that they spend on consumer products that hucksters and advertisers tell them they need. As the war ends, Gertie notices that the defense workers are briefly excited, but then grow worried, because war has been their livelihood: "Gertie could hear no rejoicing, no lifting of the heart that all the planned killing and wounding of men were finished. Rather it was as if the people had lived on blood, and now that the bleeding was ended, they were worried about their future food" (495). This passage is intricate in its implications: on the one hand, the impending loss of jobs was a real concern. In 1945 America, no one knew if the Great Depression would return. Workers had (and have) relatively little control over how to make a living, being sub-

ject to vast economic and demographic shifts driven by capital accumulation. (The migration from rural Kentucky to Detroit is a prime example). On the other hand, the passage clearly implies that war has turned the people on the home front into vampires. The “planned killing” produces an unplanned effect that has corrupted society itself. The novel thus identifies a dialectical relationship between a structural analysis of war and one borrowing from a mythical notion. In war, the nation has made a Faustian bargain, as Grossman might call it; an evil has settled in the society that Arnow can only describe as vampirism.

Martin Luther King, Jr. analyzed war with a dialectic similar in form. In his “A Christmas Sermon on Peace” in 1967, he argues that “we will never have peace in the world until men everywhere recognize that ends are not cut off from means, because the means represent the ideal in the making, and the end in process, and ultimately you can’t reach good ends through evil means, because the means represent the seed and the end represents the tree” (518). Here King joins structural analysis of society with his belief that war itself is “evil.” The interpenetration of the means and ends relation can be analyzed and supported by evidence to some extent, but it also must be a belief or assumption that ultimately cannot be exhausted by analysis. King, for example, uses the term “evil” not casually, but as a notion bound up with his Christian faith and theology. So too is his assertion that “all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied to a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality” (517).¹⁵ Of course, this statement is also informed by King’s observations of the social process, which are strikingly similar to Marx’s understanding of humans as social beings.¹⁶ Though King’s terms “destiny” and “structure of reality” have a spiritual connotation, the bulk of his arguments against Vietnam are not based only on his faith; like Marx’s assumptions about the processes of human social relations, they are confirmed by observation, subject to interrogation, and tested by evidence.¹⁷ Yet the conviction that war is “evil” and that means inhere in ends is necessarily supplemental to his material analysis.

Vietnam native Le Ly Hayslip’s memoir *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* seems to bear out King’s belief about means and ends. Hayslip grew up in a village near Danang that largely supported the Viet Cong (or National Liberation Front, as they called themselves) and its antecedents in the war of independence against China, France, and then the U.S. After being a member of the support structure of the Viet Cong as a girl, Hayslip was forced for political reasons to move to Saigon, Danang, and eventually San Diego, as the wife of an American contractor. While the ultimate goal of her book is reconciliation, Hayslip describes how the war destroyed Vietnam’s age-old communal way of life, leaving its rural majority caught between a devastating war in the countryside and exploitation in the cities. Because the Republican government of the South was effectively propped up by an immense bribe from the U.S., it spawned a culture of corruption as thoroughgoing as it was ruthless. In rural

areas, only cynical petty officials shared in the plunder, and Republican soldiers functioned like mercenaries. Villagers suspected of aiding the Viet Cong were tortured and murdered in prisons and often had their houses, farms, and livestock destroyed. The U.S. military ultimately leveled most of the villages in the area in the coming years, killing or dispossessing the very people it was ostensibly freeing. The Viet Cong, on the other hand, became increasingly murderous in their dealings with villagers, according to Hayslip, engaging in frequent assassinations of those suspected of being political rivals or collaborators—along with the latter's friends and relatives. In a society where almost everyone was likely to have a relative on the wrong side, a culture of suspicion and vengeance began to emerge, often fueled by children, who were drawn into these machinations without understanding their ramifications (70). When Hayslip is released relatively quickly from government prison (after nonetheless being beaten and tortured), she comes under the suspicion of the Viet Cong and is called before a kind of tribunal. Whisked into the jungle for a mock execution designed to terrorize her, she is raped—against orders—by the two soldiers escorting her. She is soon forced to flee to Saigon and later Danang.

Few accounts rival Hayslip's for describing how precarious the lives of women are in war. In the cities, she becomes subject to what might be called a culture of rape. Rural girls are forced into prostitution, sex slavery, and other service jobs that leave them subject to constant sexual harassment. At several points, Hayslip is expected to perform sexual favors for men (which she most often resists) merely to garner routine social services or to keep from being imprisoned or killed over specious political innuendo. Among her other options are to attach herself to men who would support her financially (a course Hayslip and a sister eventually choose) or to work in the domestic trades under brutal, exploitative conditions (the fate of one of Hayslip's sisters and her mother). In sum, virtually every working-class woman is faced with the choice of either sexual objectification, degrading and ill-paid domestic servitude, or trading in the dangerous black market economy (which Hayslip also does at one point). Unlike the vengeance rape that occurs, for example, in Germany after World War II,¹⁸ the culture of rape that prevails in Vietnam is characterized not just by the profound physical and emotional vulnerability of women, but also by a near-complete commodification of sexuality and of the relations between men and women.

Many of Hayslip's descriptions of gender relations in war are consonant with those of antiwar feminist thinkers going back to Virginia Woolf. As Susan Sontag puts it succinctly, "the killing machine has a gender and it is male" (6). Cynthia Enloe has written extensively on the ways in which war and militarization are gendered masculine and how they oppress women, in part by associating them exclusively with the feminine, which is in turn held—ostensibly by necessity—to be subordinate to the masculine. Women and men become fixed in the mother/soldier, wife/soldier, comfort provider/soldier oppositions, thwarting the fact that, in general, humans are complexly gendered. The collapse of gender into biological sex oppresses women inordinately in both material and

psychological ways, but the military's subordination of the feminine also becomes a means of controlling men. As Linda Boose observes, "every public power arrangement depends on the control of femininity and masculinity as concepts, from which notions of the control of individual sexed subjects becomes possible" (69). This insight offers a bridge between the feminist and Marxist analytic traditions: while war and militarization serve patriarchy (as the domination of women by men and of the feminine by the masculine), it also serves class interests, the capitalist class. Control of subjects, not some vague claim about human nature, is the key to understanding and resisting war.

Yet, there is an aspect of gender that is less well explained by rational method. Although she does not articulate it in this way, Hayslip's book suggests that the process of hypermasculinization in war produces a kind of cosmological imbalance in the masculine and the feminine that both causes, and is manifested by, the unleashing of extraordinary destruction. This imbalance is described by the ancient notion of yin yang, which Hayslip invokes explicitly in her subsequent book, *Child of War, Woman of Peace* (178). Within individuals, societies, and the cosmos itself, opposing aspects of all sorts—in our case masculine and feminine—are in a relationship of dynamic complementarity. When one aspect becomes tyrannical, it is not simply the other that suffers, but the whole. According to this understanding, war would be characterized by the overbearing presence of the masculine, a condition under which violence, killing, and death—the extremes of the masculine aspect—come to dominate existence. This condition in turn produces more killing, a vicious cycle that is difficult to escape, but which *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* is dedicated to breaking. The book ends with a Vietnamese Buddhist parable in which enemies destroy each other's lives and loved ones in "a fight over strong beliefs about right and wrong" (363). The cycle of destruction begins with one chopping off the others' arm, which could be understood as a symbolic castration. The maimed boy retaliates by killing and dismembering the other boy's grandmother and raping his fiancée. It is of course crucial that violence against women is the ultimate revenge, sanctioned by a supposedly just cause, but also fueled by the humiliation of the amputation. Thus, the cycle of war's destruction is bound up with gender. Eventually, the sounding of a temple bell breaks the trance-like grip of vengeance, and the boys realize the futility of more destruction and dedicate themselves to living.¹⁹

Hayslip's father, a peasant farmer, most clearly articulates the war/gender relationship. In her youth, he teaches Le Ly about the village tradition of the woman warrior, which she then understood to mean fighting for Vietnam's independence. However, as she gets older and sees the horror of war firsthand, she comes to realize "what my father meant when he called me a 'woman warrior' so many years before. A woman may do many things, but the first thing god equipped her for is to bring forth and nourish life, and to defend it with a warrior's strength . . . to find life in the midst of death and nourish it" (70). While the implication that a woman's duty is to give birth is perhaps patriarchal, the broader message is that both women

and men have an obligation to nurture life, even if this notion is typically gendered feminine. In fact, her father later says to Le Ly, “You and me—we weren’t born to make enemies. Don’t make vengeance your god, because such gods are satisfied only by human sacrifice” (200). (Ironically, it is her mother who is more in favor of the war, a position she comes to regret later in life). Hayslip’s father makes this observation at a time when the war between Republican Vietnamese and Viet Cong is dominated by brutal revenge killings, the worst aspect of civil war.²⁰ It is important on two levels: one, he sees the ostensibly feminine principle of nourishing life as his role, thus distinguishing gender from biological sex. Two, it shows that his folk wisdom, informed by the myths and traditions governing village life, is more astute than any instrumentalist understanding of war: it predicts uncontrollable destruction.

North Vietnamese Army veteran Bao Ninh’s ambiguously autobiographical novel *The Sorrow of War* touches on all the phenomena I have been discussing. Like *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, it serves to demonstrate that means inhere in ends. What makes it particularly remarkable is that it comes from the “winning” side, which was ostensibly fighting for justice, Vietnamese independence, and communal egalitarianism. The novel is an indictment of the effects of Western colonization and imperialism, but it also raises doubts about whether or not war can possibly be a means to creating a just society.

If anything, Ninh’s picture of Vietnam is bleaker than Hayslip’s. While his book is fiction, Ninh implies obvious parallels between himself and his main character, Kien, both of whom are one of only ten survivors out of a North Vietnamese Army brigade of five hundred.²¹ The prevailing feeling in the book is one of profound alienation; like Paul Baumer in *All Quiet on the Western Front* (to which Ninh’s novel seems to owe a debt), Kien is alone at the end, all of his friends and comrades dead or irreparably damaged. Veterans have been left to wrestle without treatment with post traumatic stress, of which Kien seems to have classic symptoms. Beginning with his service on a postwar MIA team looking for bodies, the novel describes the extraordinary cost of the war, which exceeds even the millions dead and the vast areas of land pulverized by bombs and denuded by chemicals. While Vietnam has ousted its colonizers, Kien remembers the war-ending conquest of Saigon in 1975—“V-Day” – not as triumphal but “like an apocalypse,” replete with “drinking and destruction”—“a strange and horrible night” (106-7).

Unlike *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *The Sorrow of War* focuses on the world left to the survivors. Ninh implies that although its cause was just, the process of war has left Vietnam brutal, corrupted, and suffering from a loss of ideals. “What’s so different here and now from the vulgar and cruel life we all experienced during the war?” Kien wonders; “the prewar peace and the postwar peace were in such contrast” (47, 63). Now his once “lovely Hanoi” is rife with thugs, black markets, and corruption. The otherwise laudable ideals of communism have been made cynically hollow by war. When Kien asks a fellow veteran if peace is not better than war, the vet replies, “This kind of peace? In this kind of peace it seems people have un-

masked themselves and revealed their true horrible selves. So much blood, so many lives sacrificed—for what?” (42). Prolonged destruction has qualitatively changed the society.

Like Hayslip’s account, Ninh’s implicitly analyzes this destruction in terms of gender. While Ninh never uses the terms yin yang, a similar logic shapes his analysis—the perception that masculine and feminine are profoundly out of balance. However, in contrast with Hayslip, a patriarchal understanding of gender stands in conflict with a nascent feminist consciousness exhibited by both the novel and Kien. On one level, what makes the novel particularly powerful is that Kien (and perhaps Ninh) are virtually wrecked by this conflict, which seems to prevent him from healing. His patriarchal training in the proper roles for men and women prevents him from fully realizing his unconscious insight that a dichotomous understanding of gender, and of men and women, is at the heart of “the sorrow of war.”

This conflict is apparent in the novel’s descriptions of the worst aspects of war, which are dominated by the rape and killing of women. For example, on V-Day, Kien is among the fighters who capture the airport at Saigon. After the fighting, he falls asleep and on waking realizes that he is sitting next to a corpse, “a naked woman, her breasts firm and standing upright, her legs stretched out and open like scissors, her long hair covering her face . . . She looked young. No blood was visible” (101). His perception of this tableau suggests that he feels it is simultaneously terrible, beautiful, and erotic; given her youth and an absence of visible wounds, she seems uncorrupted by age or war. Yet this romantic aestheticizing is soon wrecked when a soldier trips over the corpse and begins to abuse it:

Enraged, he grabbed the corpse by one leg and dragged her across the floor and down the stairs. Her skull thudded down the steps like a heavy ball. When he reached the concrete floor at the bottom of the stairs, he braced himself, lifted the dead girl and threw her out into the sunshine next to another pile of dead southern commandos. The body bounced up, her arms spread wide, and her mouth opened as if she were about to cry out. Her head dropped back with another thud on the concrete. (102)

Outraged, his fellow soldiers nearly kill this “lout.” Only Kien’s intervention saves him. Later, the men “found some pretty clothes in a suitcase and dressed the dead girl, combing her hair into a bun and washing her face” (103). Clearly, they see the woman as a symbol of something not to be violated, to be made chaste again. Yet the novel complicates any sentimentalism here: Kien stops the soldier from being killed by asking sarcastically, “Just because of that you wanted to kill him?” (103). We know that in the previous scene (a month earlier, but adjacent in the novel), Kien has killed four women defenders of the Saigon police headquarters. The last is in retaliation, after she killed a comrade who had decided to let her go—because she was a woman. The implication of these scenes is ambivalent politically: they suggest that war is death of chivalry, innocence, and in-

corruptibility, and that the death and violation of women, both literal and symbolic, is especially tragic. This view is ostensibly antiwar, but its patriarchal logic has also traditionally been invoked to justify or initiate wars as necessary to protect helpless women. Moreover, no living woman can be incorruptible in this idealized sense; being dead is, in effect, a necessary condition of this purity.

A similar set of contradictions surrounds Kien's memory of his fellow soldier Hoa, who sacrifices herself to save a group of wounded Vietnamese. She distracts a platoon of American soldiers long enough to allow the wounded to escape, but in the process is gang-raped and probably killed. Her selflessness and her suffering prompt Kien in later years to reflect on the war's true cost. He cannot find Hoa after her rape or any signs of her later when he serves on the MIA team; thus, all that remains is "sorrow, the immense sorrow, the sorrow of having survived. The sorrow of war" (192). That this memory invokes the book's title is testament to its importance: the loss of Hoa represents what Vietnamese society has lost, too: "the kindest, most worthy people have fallen away, or even been tortured, humiliated before being killed, or buried and wiped away by the machinery of war...Justice may have won, but cruelty, death, and inhuman violence have also won" (193). Thus, what is arguably the central contention of the novel—that war means cruelty, death, and inhuman violence no matter how just the cause—is articulated in a reflection on the rape and killing of a woman.

The first act of rape that Kien witnesses in the war is even more tragic for him. It is recounted to occur two-thirds of the way through the non-linear novel, allowing its emotional power to build, thereby revealing more clearly the damage it visits on the characters. In the opening moments of the U.S. entry into war, Kien's childhood sweetheart and the love of his life, Phuong, is raped by fellow North Vietnamese. This act resonates in multiple ways in the novel. It demonstrates, as Hayslip does so well, that women are extremely vulnerable in wartime. Phuong is on a train heading to the South following Kien, who has just been mustered into the army. The train is bombed by American planes, and in the chaos, a sailor beats Kien and, along with others, rapes Phuong. The rape is symbolically significant because it happens on the first day of the war and is perpetrated not by the enemy but by a fellow countryman. Kien reacts by beating the sailor to death with an iron bar. Yet, this killing is hardly a victory; together with the rape, it signals that the war will be an indiscriminate slaughter. As Phuong says a little earlier, "War does this, war smashes and destroys" (216). Kien and Phuong now have a "new status as multiple-rape victim and brutal murderer" (218), which suggests that the rape and killing have violated them both.

Both rapes occur in situations where Kien is emasculated in the patriarchal sense, unable to save the women from the more powerful U.S. soldiers and Vietnamese thugs. Thus, he is feminized, a condition inadequately ameliorated by the killing. Yet, it is not just his manhood that is assaulted, but also his feminine aspect. There is no sense that his masculinity is triumphantly made whole again, because, here, masculinity does not represent the whole man.²² As the enemies in Hayslip's parable discover, destruction only leads to more

destruction, not a culmination or cessation.

Yet, the rape of Phuong is also significant because she otherwise represents – problematically—the antithesis of war for Kien, beauty and vitality against horror and death. She is a “free spirit,” an artist who resists forced conformity and is suspicious of Communist Party orthodoxies geared toward expediency rather than principle (129-131). Miserably suffering in the years after the war from what could be called post traumatic stress,²³ Kien harkens back to a prewar, pre-rape Phuong in a search for some kind of solace. He remembers her as effectively superhuman:

No one would ever come close to her beauty. She was like a green meadow after spring rains, as fragrant as flowers in bloom waving against the horizon and waves of fresh grass rustling. She was passionate, untamed, magnetic . . . a vulnerable, innocent beauty forever on the brink of destruction (227).

This extraordinary idealization testifies both to the depth of his suffering and to the extent to which he clings to a patriarchal worldview to assuage it. The other side of idealization, however, is demonstrated in the depiction of Phuong’s response to her rape. She calls herself “unclean” and Kien notices a change in her demeanor: “once pure and beautiful, she had spoken like a callous, uncaring pessimist, ready to bury anything tender in their past” (218). When she bathes the next day, Kien observes that she does not hide her nudity, which he sees as “boldness”: “From being a pure, sweet and simple girl she was now a hardened experienced woman, indifferent to vulnerable emotions” (223). Not surprisingly, given this good girl to bad woman switch, Phuong becomes, in her words, “badly soiled, rotten through and through” (144), and she begins a life of seedy promiscuity and perhaps prostitution. It is as if she were retroactively responsible for the rape. Thus, the antithesis of the feminine as life, growth, and purity is the outlaw feminine: promiscuity and corruption.

Yet there is an ambivalence in the novel that suggests the possibility of moving beyond a patriarchal worldview. For example, Phuong is at other moments portrayed as being more than a two-dimensional symbol of corrupted purity. She is not always simply a nurturer turned whore; she is also portrayed as having “an unusual reserve of strength and resilience,” a gendering that is more nuanced (214). She stands up to Kien when he defends the war and later reminds him, “You loved the idea of going to war; you were headstrong, you wanted to remain pure and loyal to your ideals. I don’t want to sound disdainful, but there’s nothing original in that” (135). In fact, her views on war are informed by Kien’s father, who is an artist. He functions as a kind of seer whose disturbing paintings prefigure the dark years of the war; symbolically, he dies on the first day that air raid sirens are heard in Hanoi, signaling the death of creativity (127). Also complicating the patriarchal gendering is that it is Kien’s stepfather—another man—who tells Kien, “a human being’s duty on earth is to live, not to kill. Taste all manner of life . . . I want

you to guard against all those who demand that you die just to prove something" (58). Therefore, the novel does not simply equate male/female with masculine/feminine. Men can be nurturers of life and women can be assertive and intellectual. This suggests that what the war destroys and violates is not only women, but also the feminine in everyone. In fact, the best and happiest aspects of living are associated with the feminine in the novel, including prewar Vietnam, "lovely" Hanoi, Kien's childhood and adolescence before the war, creativity, art, love, and even life itself when it is opposed to the death of war. Gendered masculine—or more accurately, hypermasculine in the yin yang sense—are war, killing, rape, thugs, corrupt political institutions, and Kien himself, as soldier/killer.

The dual character of Kien's gender is made more explicit at the end of the story (which in the novel comes both in the middle and at the end). He gives the manuscript of his novel to a "mute girl" who lives in his building. For him, she represents all the women who have been damaged by the war, including Phuong, Hoa, and the naked woman at the airport. As a kind of muse for him, she will eventually release his story to the world. It is not hard to see that the mute girl, who the narrator later calls "an enigma bequeathed to us by the author," as an embodiment of Kien's feminine self, an aspect silenced by war.²⁴ At one point, the narrator even notes, "At times he wasn't aware that she was even female, for he changed her name often from masculine to feminine" (113). Later Kien is described as "a spiritual hermaphrodite" (229), someone who is trying to rebalance yin and yang.

An analysis of war in Marxist tradition would examine capital accumulation—with its destructive competition between national capitals—and the victimization of the working classes both as cannon fodder and as exploited workers. A feminist materialist analysis would study the particular ways in which war harms women and, as Cynthia Cockburn puts it, would uncover "the differentiation and asymmetry of masculine and feminine as governing principles, as idealized qualities, as practices, as symbols" (29). These forms of analysis both look for concrete connections between social phenomena and can be methodologically diverse, ranging from the social sciences to literary study. Thus, they can be complementary as they are rooted in similar epistemological assumptions. What might supplement this sort of analysis are insights derived from traditional, "residual" observations about humans, society, and nature, including those I have been examining. A comprehensive analysis of what war does requires attention to these knowledges, no matter what we may call them: myth, religion, or folklore. Historically, the feminist tradition has been more amenable to them, but the Marxist tradition has not, with its emphasis on the science of history and society and an aversion to mysticism. Yet, this remainder is not mystical: we can identify it even if we cannot fully account for it. This recognition actually strengthens the "science" of a materialist critique by acknowledging, yet carefully qualifying, its limitations.

Adorno and Horkheimer might say that the seemingly compelling, but more mythical or cosmological descriptions of vampirism, the interrelated structure of reality, or the problem of masculine and feminine aspects out of balance may come from "nature." Not nature as

that which enlightenment rationality must dominate but an object that still has authority to speak, that cannot be exhausted by the "cogitato universalis," the shackling of all thought to instrumentalism. This sense of nature is not impervious to our understanding, which develops in an ongoing process that can always reveal more; rather, it is that which we do not know yet. What we do not understand cannot be declared unknowable; to do so would be to objectify the unassignable or the remainder, an act of bad faith that would arbitrarily (politically) limit our knowledge.²⁵ The "remainder" is never fixed, but is always there.

This point is perhaps more easily made with an example. Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Ceremony* draws heavily on the Laguna Pueblo mythical tradition, which offers compelling articulations of the "interrelated structure of reality" and yin yang-like gender imbalance in order to characterize and explain the far-reaching destruction of war. The novel is about a Laguna Pueblo native returning home from World War II; yet it also becomes, in effect, Silko's ambitious description of the traditional Laguna worldview. As the story opens, Tayo, the main character, is apparently suffering from what we now call post traumatic stress, and the reader assumes that the novel will be about whether or not he can heal and rejoin the community. Yet as the story unfolds, we come to see that much more is at stake: Tayo's healing is bound up with restoring a cosmic balance that has been tilted toward evil by the world war's cycle of destruction, which is understood as both a cause and an effect. Tayo is led by tribal elders to understand that "his sickness was only part of something larger, and his cure would be found only in something great and inclusive of everything" (125-6). As they tell him, "It is important to all of us. Not only for your sake, but for this fragile world" (36).²⁶ In other words, Tayo's individual "sickness" is indistinguishable from that which afflicts the community and the "world." Restoring the balance of the cosmos requires that Tayo reorient himself to the ancient rhythms and rituals of his people. Implicitly, he must return to an earth-centered existence, reintegrating the feminine principle with a masculine one that has become dominant, to terrible effect. He undergoes ordeals that culminate in a confrontation with the so-called "destroyers," individuals who promote death and destruction. Though he has the opportunity to kill their leader, which would apparently extinguish their threat, Tayo realizes that the killing will only consecrate the evil with more blood, producing more and greater violence. Thus, his non-act accomplishes the return to balance. His recognition that he cannot stop killing with killing shows a clear correspondence with Hayslip's Buddhism and with King's idea that means inhere in the ends.

Ceremony is a powerful antiwar story with a compelling symmetry deeply rooted in knowledges that resonate with our other texts. Yet, theoretically, at least, there is no remainder in its explanation for the extraordinary destruction of World War II. In the Laguna worldview (as Silko describes it), there is no myth/reality distinction; what the Western tradition would see as myth is, for the traditional Laguna, inextricable from the practice of daily life.²⁷ The rituals or "ceremonies" are not simply gestures that help reorient Tayo and the

people towards a nurturing earth, one way in which modern thought might accommodate or participate in these practices; rather, the performance of the rituals literally produces certain eventualities. When the Laguna elders stop repainting the ancient and sacred image of the antelope mother goddess during the war, it is not simply a symptom of misplaced priorities, but also is a cause of them. More problematic for our purposes is the novel's suggestion that the world war is the culmination of efforts by evil Native magicians or destroyers who thrive on chaos and human blood. The same magicians were also responsible for the European conquest of the Americas and for the invention of white people in a particularly horrific act of conjuring centuries earlier.

These myths could thus be understood as personalizing, explaining away great historical movements and forces as the products of discrete individual acts and conspiracies. In this sense, the Laguna worldview would give into "enchantment," as Horkheimer and Adorno would call it. Most problematically, it offers bad explanations, leaving out structural forces such as capital accumulation and the competition between states for market domination. It cannot predict, or even account for, the rapid and continuous historical upheavals characteristic of modernity. Analyzing and resisting war requires these rational explanations.

The limitations of rational thought are not debilitating when they are understood dialectically. If we pay attention to these less readily understood phenomena, we will have better sense of what war does to a society. Such a recognition also forces us to ask whether war can be a means to justice, even a revolutionary war fought in the name of freedom.²⁸ It also forces us to ask what kind of damage is unleashed by, for example, the permanent war mobilization in the U.S. since World War II. The answers, especially to the former, are not easily discerned; yet to ignore the question is to abandon rational analysis.

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Notes

¹ In this essay, I will use the term war to denote modern war, which has been characterized by mass mechanized slaughter of both combatants and civilians. I therefore tentatively distinguish this kind of war from that waged on a smaller scale with more primitive weapons and with less destruction. However, I do not wish to diminish the horror of the latter kind of war or to declare *a priori* that the phenomena I try to describe here are not relevant to a smaller scale.

² This passage is also quoted in Lilly (19), who adds that U.S. troops also raped civilians, a war phenomenon to which I will return.

³ For Horkheimer and Adorno, Nazism was inextricable from positivism—the all-or-nothing mythology necessary to fascist society.

⁴ I borrow Raymond Williams's notion "residual" to describe knowledges derived in the past that remain dynamic in the present, even if they do not accord with "modern" rationality (*Marxism and Literature* 122). Inevitably, this term is inadequate, because it assumes a historicity that the residual knowledges themselves might reject. Because these knowledges are in many instances cosmological, they would implicitly claim to be outside of socio-historical processes. However, as I hope to make clear, a dialectical rational method simultaneously must be suspicious of notions claiming to be ahistorical, yet must allow the possibility of ahistoricity—one possible instance of the "unassignable."

⁵ Grossman makes a similar distinction in *On Killing*.

⁶ See Gray's chapter "Images of the Enemy" (131-169) for a more complete analysis. Besides racism, he also includes extreme ideological fanaticism as a dehumanizing force.

⁷ As this scene underscores, Jones's World War II novels relentlessly de-romanticize combat and the military.

⁸ I write "purported" not to deny that soldiers would have sexual needs and desires but to point out that these desires are not simply a constant, with war as the variable; instead, we should examine the extent to which war is sexualized by military policy and propaganda. I take this to be one of the central arguments of Cynthia Enloe and other feminist studies of militarization. See also, Claudia Card, "Rape as a Weapon of War," *Hypatia* 11 (Fall 1996): 3-17.

⁹ There have been many recent studies of the so-called "comfort women," who were systematically raped in organized camps during World War II. Three that have been helpful here are Yoshiaki Yoshimi and Suzanne O'Brien, *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military in World War II* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000); Maria Rose Henson, *Comfort Woman: A Filipina's Story of Prostitution and Slavery under the Japanese Military* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999); and a novel, Kiana Dav-enport, *Song of the Exile* (New York: Ballantine, 1999).

¹⁰ Among the myriad examples of atrocities in response to sniping include those of the German Army in Belgium in 1914. See Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods* for accounts of the British Army slaughter of whole families when harassed by snipers after the fights at Lexington and Concord. Ari Folman's 2008 documentary *Waltz with Bashir* remarks the Israeli Army's inordinate response to snipers in Lebanon in the 1980s.

¹¹ Atrocities have often been described most explicitly by veterans in fictional forms, perhaps because of the dissociative character of the violence. An excellent example of this phenomenon is Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*. The film begins with Folman and a fellow Israeli military veteran trying to remember their 1980s service in Lebanon, which they have largely forgotten. The film is animated as Folman visits other fellow veterans trying to resurrect his and their memories. Yet, at the end of the film, actual news footage of the victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacre—the horrifying atrocity that Folman partially witnessed and then repressed—replaces the animation. Thus, the form of the film itself suggests why artifice mediates what has otherwise been unthinkable or inarticulable. The moment of remembering is, in the formal language of the film, when the artifice gives way to reality.

¹² See his memoir *If I Die in a Combat Zone*.

¹³ The politics of Grossman's book are fascinating. To a reader like me, it is strong evidence that humans are not simply killers by nature. On the other hand, Grossman serves in the military, and while he describes the troubling affects of killing on Vietnam veterans, he maintains that the war was "worth fighting," a key theater of the Cold War, which "has ended in victory" (274).

¹⁴ Fiction can be a place where the “remainder” phenomena I am analyzing can be described without violating the more rigorous constraints of history or theory. Yet fiction can be a site of implicit theorizing, which, I would argue, is what the fictional texts I analyze are doing. See Gregory Meyerson, “Tortilla Curtain and the Ecology of Fear” (*A Contracorriente* 2004, http://www.ncsu.edu/project/accontracorriente/fall_04/fall_04.htm) for a discussion of the theory/novel relationship.

¹⁵ King uses similar language in “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

¹⁶ Not coincidentally, King increasingly came to criticize capitalism and its moral economy: “We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a ‘thing-oriented’ society to a ‘person-oriented’ society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.” As for U.S. foreign policy, he concluded, “we are on the side of the wealthy and secure while we create a hell for the poor.”

¹⁷ These assumptions can never be exhausted by theory—we cannot stand outside “reality,” to use King’s term, to make these judgments about it; theorizing is, instead, a dynamic process that must account for the ongoing movement of history.

¹⁸ See Lilly’s chapter on rapes in Germany, 112-160.

¹⁹ I owe thanks to Jim Egge for shedding some light on the particular character of Vietnamese Buddhism. See also the writings of Thich Nhat Hahn.

²⁰ While the Vietnam War was largely a war of independence from imperialism, it nevertheless divided the Vietnamese people, to some extent. However, it is worth noting that Hayslip apparently left out some of the U.S. military brutality she witnessed on the part of the U.S. military. According to Oliver Stone, who directed a 1993 movie version of her two books (*Heaven and Earth*), Hayslip’s publisher made her do so in order to avoid offending American readers. Refer to the director’s commentary on the DVD release of the film.

²¹ Vietnam veteran Marc Levy discusses these parallels in his interview with Ninh. Levy implies that Ninh is still haunted by the war. He observes Ninh chain smoking, perhaps drinking heavily, and notes that Ninh is reluctant to discuss his specific experiences. Levy mentions that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is, not surprisingly, a problem in postwar Vietnam and that veterans often drink heavily because there is almost no treatment available. Since the novel invites readers to draw parallels between fictional, historical, and biographical realms, it seems like another example of art mediating a painful reality.

²² This economy of gender stands in stark contrast to that typically valorized in Hollywood war films and westerns, where the hero’s journey ends with the assertion or reassertion of his masculinity. The moment when the hero faces and usually kills the bad guy or enemy is where he is revealed as fully male.

²³ I use the term “post traumatic stress” both intentionally and as a short hand. While Kien does exhibit what seems like clinical symptoms, I do not want to suggest that some kind of cure of his malady would be the end of the problems the novel describes. The danger of using clinical terms is that they can imply that his particular suffering is isolated in individuals and therefore has narrow, definable boundaries. The point of this essay is precisely to challenge these boundaries.

²⁴ Jungians may be tempted to call this feminine aspect Kien’s anima. I would resist this inclination because it imports a fixed geography of the psyche that I think contrasts with the yin-yang dynamic that seems to operate in the novel. Moreover, Jungian psychology embraces myth, but not in the same sense as Horkheimer and Adorno’s remainder. Jungian myth is an observable, perhaps hypostatized, determinate that lends itself to political

abuse. A charismatic leader, for example, could be seen as embodying some archetype that we are innately unable to resist, a notion that is anathema to dialectical rational thinking.

²⁵ Such is how I understand Adorno's position in *Negative Dialectics*: to assign a *a priori* limits to knowledge is similar to positivism. In both cases, the course of knowledge becomes the revelation of fixed relationships rather than a process taking place in history, where what counts as knowledge can change.

²⁶ The paradox for a Euro-American worldview is that Tayo is no more important than anyone else, a part of a much larger whole, and yet his actions as a single individual will save the world.

²⁷ Moreover, they would make no distinction between daily life and religion or spirituality. These are all common features of "premodern" communal subsistence cultures. One of Silko's ongoing concerns is to examine the relationship between the "old ways" and modern, Euro-American thought and life.

²⁸ I make this assertion advisedly. It would be arrogant for a scholar living in the relative safety of the U.S. to condemn all wars taken up by oppressed peoples as wrong. However, I would argue that the questions I raise should nevertheless be asked. Moreover, I unapologetically challenge any romanticizing about revolution that glosses over the horror of war.

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