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## A Transnational Perspective On Vietnam War Narratives of The U.S. and South Korea

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A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON VIETNAM WAR NARRATIVES OF THE U.S.  
AND SOUTH KOREA

by

NA RAE KIM

Under the Direction of Christopher Kocela, PhD

ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that many countries participated in the Vietnam War, their war stories tend to marginalize one another. In this study, I use a transnationalist critical lens to compare the ethnocentric stories of the U.S. and South Korea. Instead of presenting transnationalism as a focus on the changes that arise through travel between different cultures, I rely on another meaning of transnationalism as a form of consciousness. In order to compare differing perspectives on the Vietnam War as represented in the U.S. and South Korea, I compare Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods* and Suk-Yong Hwang's *The Shadow of Arms*, based on the writing style of the texts, the shared theme of friendly fire, and representation of the My Lai massacre. As a result, this comparison challenges readers in each nation to recognize perspectives on the Vietnam War which they may have missed.

INDEX WORDS: Transnationalism, Vietnam War Narratives, Tim O'Brien, *In the Lake of the Woods*, Suk-yong Hwang, *The Shadow of Arms*.

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NA RAE KIM

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who taught me the value of life, trusted my potential and inspired me. Without your love, I would not be what I am now.

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## ***1 INTRODUCTION: THE VIETNAM WAR AND TRANSNATIONALISM***

Vietnam War literature plays an important role in twentieth century American literature more generally. Novels such as Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, and Bobby Mason's *In Country* help readers to understand this controversial war and the experiences of its veterans. In discussing and defining Vietnam War literature, critics have focused on issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), gender and racial identity, the relationship between experimental form and theme, and the political desire to forget this complex conflict. In his book *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*, Jonathan Shay argues that post-traumatic stress disorder of Vietnam War veterans is caused by loss of moral values at war and by the apathy toward veterans in American society. In Susan Jeffords' book, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War*, the representation of brotherhood in Vietnam War films is portrayed as blurring racial and class difference in the soldier's world so that graphic fighting scenes can be portrayed as regenerating masculinity. According to Jeffords, this regeneration also takes place by contrasting the suffering of combat soldiers with the victimization of prostitutes and raped women during the War. Focusing on the storytelling style in her essay "How to Tell a True War Story: Metafiction in *The Things They Carried*," Catherine Calloway explains that O'Brien's use of metafiction complicates the relationship between protagonist and writer, fiction and reality, so as to construct a "truth" about the Vietnam War that emphasizes its unique political and cultural status in the history of American conflicts. As a result of these and other studies, the Vietnam War has come to be regarded as fundamental to literary representation not only of violent conflict, but of traumatic experience, gender and racial construction, and the relationship between history and narrative.

One issue not addressed in this rich body of criticism, however, can be captured in a question that arose in my mind when reading Vietnam War literature written by American writers: why does the Korean voice not appear in it? For eight years, from 1965 to 1973, Korea sent to Vietnam about 3.2 million soldiers; this number comes second to that of the American soldiers. American narratives do not consider the Korean soldiers' war story; rather, they marginalize or ignore this story. Consequently, the scholarly tradition of reading Vietnam War literature I mentioned in the first paragraph reveals an Americanized Vietnam War discourse. Shay covers interviews only of American veterans when explaining PTSD and its impact on the soldiers participating in the Vietnam War; his study does not consider Vietnamese or Korean cultural backgrounds that might have produced differing PTSD symptoms. Jeffords' argument about gender includes Vietnamese and Korean women; however, her representation of these women, as feeble, supports the reconstruction of the masculine image in American society rather than addressing non-American experience. Moreover, critics such as Calloway draw on the writing style of American narratives, but too rarely discuss formal experimentation by writers of other nationalities.

In her book, *The Vietnam War, The American War*, Renny Christopher argues that Vietnam War narratives in America draw on only the American soldiers' individual experience because of the mythologized heroic image of the individual, and particularly the soldier, in American culture. Another scholar, Christina Schwenkel, supports Christopher's reading: Schwenkel's book, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam*, argues that contemporary Vietnam War discourses rely on Cold War ideology without any Vietnamese perspectives on the war. In opposition to this ethnocentric analysis, Christopher and Schwenkel compare American and Vietnamese narratives in order to include the latter in Vietnam War discourse. Similarly,

Xiao Bang Li's *Voices from the Vietnam War* also covers American, Asian, and Russian soldiers' stories side by side. Even in these books, however, the voice of the South Korean soldier is absent.

Korean veterans during the Vietnam War have written of their experiences in texts such as Park Yong-han's *A Faraway River Song-Ba*, Ahn Jeong-hyo's *White Badge*, Lee Sang Mun's *The Yellow Man*, and Hwang Sok-Yong's *The Shadow of Arms*. In surveying this tradition, Korean scholar Jang Yun-mi classifies Korean Vietnam War narratives according to the changes of the writers' focuses on the Vietnam War. Yun-mi argues that the early narratives describe the veteran as traumatized by the death of his colleagues and by the war's inhumanity and atrocity. The writers in later narratives transform the focus from that of "a human in war," into that of "Korea in the Vietnam War." Specifically, these texts affirm that Korea, allied with America, fought against the Communists in Vietnam; but Korea has a very different relationship to Vietnam than does the United States, particularly because, for Korea, the Vietnam War can also be viewed as similar to the Korean War in which the same ethnic group was divided into two and fought against itself. Although Yun-mi discusses various viewpoints on the Vietnam War, her comparison of Vietnam War narratives written by Koreans itself as the war stories of the other nations in Vietnam War discourse and does not contrast these narratives with those of Vietnamese or American writers.

The Vietnam War involved many nations' participation including North and South Vietnam, South Korea, the United States, and its allies. As a result, I will consider Korean voices on the Vietnam War by comparing Hwang Sok-Yong's *The Shadow of Arms* with Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*. Both describe each nation's perspective on Vietnam as well as each writer's individual experience. Hwang focuses on the similarity between the Vietnam War and

the Korean War and considers the former as the fratricidal war; O'Brien describes the American circumstances before and after the war to show how this war influenced American society. A transnational comparison of these narratives will help balance and broaden perspectives on the Vietnam War.

### ***1.1 Transnationalism***

As the prefix “trans” means “beyond,” transnationalism means “extending or having interests beyond national bounds or frontiers” (*OED*). According to Vertovec’s *Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism*, the concept of transnationalism has received attention since the early twenty-first century when nations became more interconnected through the development of technology and transportation (1-2); however, academic fields have not settled on a definition for this term. Without any discussion of its meaning, critics have drawn on the *OED*’s definition when applying it in various studies. What, then, is the meaning of the word “transnational” in these studies? The differentiation of “transnational” from “international” partially explains it: international practices include the formal agreements between nations, trade, and travel, whereas transnational practices refer to interactions between non-government organizations or individuals sharing the same culture across national boundaries (Vertovec 3). This comparison indicates that transnational practices should involve the sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges across the borders of nations rather than temporary mobility between nations. Since immigrants keep their relationship with their original culture continuously, critics in the field of immigration studies apply the lens of transnationalism to their work. During the workshop by the International Organization for Migration, panels discussed why they apply transnationalism to the study of migration:

These exchanges may take the form of ideas, values and practices as well as political mobilization and economic contributions. [T]he transnational lens places the spotlights on the connections that migrants establish between countries. The concept therefore serves as an angle of analysis for the wider issues of migration and social changes. (1)

The study of migration covers not only the immigrants' connection between old and new countries, but also the social changes that happen after migration, including how immigrants settle down in the new world with their indigenous culture and how the culture in the previous country transforms the one they live in. Literary critics also apply transnationalism in order to understand the story of immigrants or that of their next generation. Literature about immigrants embodies the clash of different cultures or stories that a person or a group of people experience.

Vietnam War narratives, however, have different characteristics: they do not necessarily involve the meeting of different stories and social change; rather, Vietnam War narratives represent the stories of various subjects who experienced the same conflict, went back to their homes and interpreted that conflict based, in part, on their different national ideologies and cultural contexts. As a result, different stories about the Vietnam War are scattered around the world, and those stories become ethnocentric and tend to marginalize or ignore one other. Thus, in my thesis, I will apply transnationalism primarily as a type of consciousness rooted in one of the specific categories of transnationalism defined by Vertovec. He researches various applications of transnationalism in the humanities and social sciences and divides transnationalism into six categories: as a social morphology, as a type of consciousness, as a mode of cultural reproduction, as an avenue of capital, as a site of political engagement, and as a reconstruction of place or locality. The second one, as a type of consciousness, fits my thesis well because it presents transnationalism as “aware of multi-locality and [trying] to connect

oneself with others, both here and there who share the same routes and roots” (Vertovec 5). Whereas the other categories explain that transnationalism should involve the physical movement from one place to another, this category draws on consciousness of the difference between places.

Two studies in particular apply transnationalism as a form of consciousness in ways that illuminate my thesis. In *Thresholds of Western Culture: Identity, Postcoloniality, Transnationalism*, editors Forster and Froman organize fourteen chapters in order to explain the end of the Western values in relation to postcolonialism and transnationalism. In this study, transnationalism can be seen to represent both domination and homogeneity. In Part Two, the postcolonial African struggle to be freed from ethnocentric Western culture appears positively; however, in Part Three, Eastern Europe’s intimacy with Western domination and identification of itself with the West appears as the fragility of the transnational. In the last chapter, Eugene Eoyang clearly articulates that transnationalism means “the recognition of a both/and in preference to an either/or paradigm (which) enables us to resolve complexities without casuistry or hypocrisy (210).” Thus, transnationalism involves appreciation and co-existence of different cultures. Similarly, Peter Hitchcock’s *Imaginary States: Studies of Transnationalism*, also emphasizes the risk of the homogeneity. He illustrates that various things including poetry, coffee, and shoes, can spark the imagination and enable the possibility of the transnational consciousness. According to Hitchcock, the development of the language called Creole and Pidgin epitomizes this power of imagination. These languages appear and evolve when the two different languages meet each other, especially in the colony. Each language did not surrender to one another; instead, their convergence created a language of singularity. Hitchcock argues that this eccentric language resists being identified with or by the colonizing language and reflects the

native people's imagination of the uncolonized. Furthermore, Hitchcock discusses the change of the Nike shoes' image across time and place, referring to Derrida's interpretation of Van Gogh's painting of shoes, the workers' strike at the shoes factory, etc. While the commodity such as Nike seems to homogenize the global area as people use it in common, it also embodies the differentiated discourses about it in various cultures and times. As these examples reveal, there's no supremacy among things or only one image in the world; instead, Hitchcock argues that recognition of differences will make transnational consciousness possible.

Similarly, I will apply the lens of transnationalism to the Vietnam War discourse. As I discussed above, the Vietnam War narratives in America and Korea have marginalized their ally's stories. The absence of comparison between these narratives reveals unconsciousness of their marginalized status. If both nations become aware of and discuss the difference between their Vietnam stories, readers will come closer to achieving a balanced, transnational consciousness of the war. To examine their different viewpoints, I will compare Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of Woods* and Sok-Yong Hwang's *The Shadow of Arms*.

Tim O'Brien and Hwang Sok-Yong both participated in the Vietnam War. O'Brien took part in the Vietnam War from 1969 to 1970, serving in the 46<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment that includes the military unit that committed the My Lai massacre. Hwang served in the Blue Dragon unit stationed at Da Nang from 1967 to 1968; he worked as a market investigator as well as a patrol soldier.

After the war, they wrote their war narratives based on their experiences in the Vietnam War. Tim O'Brien wrote many war narratives, but I think that among them *In the Lake of Woods* covers not only the individual experience of war but also the socio-historical background of the same war. Hwang also published several Vietnam War narratives including *The Shadow of Arms*,

which was written in 1989 and translated into English in 1994. Among Vietnam War narratives written by South Korean writers, Hwang's viewpoint on war is different from that of O'Brien (or American writers more generally); thus, I think his narrative fits well in my transnational study of the Vietnam War. In order to compare these texts, I will focus on three topics which have been discussed in the discourse of Vietnam War narratives by American writers: the writing style of the fictions, the theme of friendly fire, and the depiction of the My Lai massacre. By considering these topics in O'Brien's and Hwang's narratives and analyzing the differences between them, my thesis will break the ethnocentric view of the war and examine different possible viewpoints on it. As a result, I will argue that telling a real war story cannot be achieved through only one nation's experience. If there are various war participants from different nationalities, gathering every voice from various participants can provide a more rounded account.

## 2 CHAPTER ONE: WHAT AND HOW TO WRITE

Although both writers experienced the same war, their location and position during the war determines their differing foci and writing styles in their narratives. While O'Brien fought in the combat at the front lines and visited My Lai several years after the massacre, Hwang saw the movement of war material and the corrupted army from his position in the rear area. As a result, their narratives reflect those differences: in O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*, the protagonist John Wade suffers from PTSD caused by his experience in the My Lai massacre; in Hwang's *The Shadow of Arms*, the main character Ahn investigates Da Nang's black market in Vietnam. Furthermore, each writer adopts different writing style: O'Brien displays a postmodern style whereas Hwang's narrative can be classified as realism. The reasons why they use these different styles also reflect their different intentions in writing. Postmodernism helps O'Brien to criticize American society's apathy toward the Vietnam War and the My Lai massacre. In contrast, realism helps Hwang to reveal the hidden cause of the Vietnam War—the cause that is not related to ending Communism.

### 2.1 Postmodernism and O'Brien

*In the Lake of the Woods* begins with John Wade's withdrawal to an isolated cabin in Minnesota. Wade, an ambitious politician, has recently lost a United States Senate election by a landslide because of the revelation of his involvement in the My Lai massacre. Although he decides to retreat with his wife, Kathy Wade, to the cabin in order to escape politics, Kathy disappears at some point during his stay and does not come back. This narrative consists of four parts: the eight "Hypothesis" chapters offer possible scenarios explaining Kathy Wade's disappearance; the seven "Evidence" chapters consist of excerpts from other texts and interviews

which seem to be useful in solving the mystery of Kathy's whereabouts; the eight chapters beginning with the title "The Nature of--" depict John's childhood and war memories; and the eight chapters beginning with "How" explain what happened on and after the day Kathy disappears.

Throughout his work, Tim O'Brien focuses on the American veteran's experience not only during America's history in which the country was defeated. This defeat shocked the veterans and American society because of their belief in America's just image. After the Second World War, America developed the image of ideal and patriotic soldiers based in large part on the characters depicted in popular film: "the values, purposes, and nature of war portrayed in [World War II] films suggested for Americans in the 1960s that the Vietnam War should be modeled after WWII" (Herzog 18). The war in Vietnam produced soldiers who did not fit these models, however. Since guerilla warfare blurs the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, Vietnamese civilians suddenly changed into the enemy, the Viet Cong appeared everywhere without front lines, the monsoon and the paddies of Vietnam confused the American soldiers, and their tactical plans often failed because they did not deliberate on the foreign circumstances—both environmental and cultural—of Vietnam. Not only did the veterans become perplexed by this new form of warfare, this war also bewildered American society more generally. As the Vietnam War was the first war broadcast by the media, American audiences back home could see the violence perpetrated by their own soldiers on the battlefield. As a result, the Vietnam War veterans did not receive the welcoming ceremonies of American soldiers in previous wars; instead, these veterans began to feel that their experiences were being denied or even covered up by an inhospitable American culture.

Both the American response to the Vietnam War and John's own family background strongly influence the relationship between John and Kathy in the novel. When John first meets Kathy, he falls in love with her: he says "the urgency came from fear, mostly; he didn't want to lose her" (32). This fear comes from his father's death in his childhood. Young John struggled, as a child, to be accepted by his father, who teased him relentlessly about his weight and not being masculine. At his father's funeral, John blames his father for dying without leaving him with any positive self-image. Later, Kathy serves as a replacement for John's dead father and as the person from whom John both seeks respect and love but whom he also mistrusts. Before he leaves for Vietnam, John begins spying on Kathy; and after he leaves for the War, he imagines himself returning "home a hero, looking spiffy in a crisp new uniform, smiling at the crowds and carrying himself with appropriate modesty and decorum" (36). But similar to the inhospitable way in which American culture treated its Vietnam veterans, Kathy cuts her contact with John while he is away at war and cheats on him with another man. In turn, Kathy's later disappearance from the cabin serves as a comment on the United States' apathy about the veterans and their disappointment at being unable to reintegrate into American society.

As a literal plot, however, the reasons for Kathy's disappearance remain unsolved at the end of the novel. Nobody in the novel, including the narrator named "O'Brien," tells what exactly happened to Kathy. O'Brien hypothesizes that she might have committed suicide, abandoned John, or perhaps even have been killed by him. Rather than provide an answer, the narrator asks the readers to keep on reading and thinking about the problem if they want to know the truth. To this end, the footnotes and interviews in the "Evidence" chapters seem objective and realistic, but they do not help solve the mystery; rather, they create another mystery about whether the evidence is true or not. Even O'Brien the narrator denies the objectivity of this

material: “Even much of what might appear to be fact in this narrative – action, word, thought – must ultimately be viewed as a diligent but still imaginative reconstruction of events” (30).

Furthermore, the stories within the “Evidence” chapters contain discrepancies when compared with those of the other chapters; for example, John’s mother argues that her son followed and respected his father, but elsewhere John is clearly consumed by anger toward his father for failing to respect and teach him. Similarly, the narrator repeatedly emphasizes how much Kathy loves John, but in the “Evidence” chapters, her sister says she was aware of his spying on her and felt scared of him. O’Brien repeats these discordant descriptions about the same event; thus, no truth about the Kathy’s disappearance exists, suggesting that the “truth” (in particular regarding such actions as the My Lai massacre) of the Vietnam veteran’s experience is likewise impossible to pin down.

Throughout his fiction, O’Brien argues that there cannot be only one truth of a “true” war story. In his previous book, *The Things They Carried*, he creates the terms “story-truth” and “happening-truth” to express this idea: “Even that story is made up. I want you to feel what I felt. I want you to know why *story-truth* is truer sometimes than *happening-truth*” (171). This argument means there cannot be only one definite truth; rather, there are only different perspectives on the same thing. *In the Lake of the Woods* also reflects this idea. For instance, John Wade describes his shooting of two men during the My Lai massacre several times, but his story changes each time. In the beginning, John says that he shoots an old Vietnamese man who holds a gun in his hand; later, John says the gun is actually a hoe and that the person he killed was one of his fellow soldiers, Weatherby. Readers cannot conclude easily whether John killed Weatherby or the Vietnamese noncombatant; and if he did, it also not clear whether he fired by accident, mistaking Weatherby or the old man for a Viet Cong, or whether he killed them

deliberately in an act of rage. As a result, O'Brien's telling of the story makes clear that people cannot reach the truth of the war until they listen to many stories about it, comparing the "happening-truth" with the "story-truth."

The "Evidence" chapters themselves also reveal the unreachable truth of the war. According to Lucas Carpenter's article, "Don't Mean Nothin': Vietnam War and Postmodernism," he argues that "prior to Vietnam, there was always the historiographic assumption that there was a larger event or event-category called a *war* that somehow contained all the individual experiences. For postmodernism [...] there is only the unique perspective of subjective experience, multiplied by hundreds of thousands [...] of simulacra rendered in an eternal now" (46). O'Brien can be read as denying "war" as a historical category and collecting simulacra. *In the Lake of the Woods* does not consist only of John Wade's perspective on the Vietnam War; O'Brien adds the testimonies and interviews of other real and fictional veterans, trauma studies about them, and the political background related to the war. Furthermore, he collects the words of civilians who did not participate in war. This collection contradicts the belief that the first-hand experience can deliver the truth of the war. By juxtaposing first-hand and second-hand experiences in an unorganized and non-chronological way, O'Brien includes many "story-truths" about the war; as a result, he makes the "happening-truth" of the war more unreachable. As Carpenter argues that the writers' postmodern approach to the Vietnam War emulates the characteristics of the war itself, O'Brien tries to describe the guerilla warfare, unclear front lines, and chaos of the war as tied to issues of truth and history questioned by postmodernism. Furthermore, I think his postmodern writing style delivers the message that there's no "hegemonic unity" or "unifying signifier" to define what the Vietnam War is or was;

instead, O'Brien collects every war story so as to bring the suppressed experiences of the Vietnam War veterans to the reader (Carpenter 3).

The structure of the chapters also reflects O'Brien's hope of reviving the many voices ignored in mainstream Vietnam War discourse. "The Nature of the Beast," the chapter about John's participation in the My Lai massacre, appears in the middle of the novel and so it seems to connect the various other stories. John's relationship with his father, his spying on his wife, his traumatized reaction to the war, his defeat in the election, and the disappearance of Kathy all seem linked to his involvement in the My Lai massacre. These series of events represent America's history as related to Vietnam. Pre-war America, which attaches to the heroic character of the soldier and the patriotic duty to protect American values, keeps silent about the veterans' unheroic actions during the War—particularly in the case of an atrocity like My Lai. But if this story is ignored or forgotten, O'Brien suggests, the past and the future of the country cannot be connected. To drive home this point through the structure of the novel, O'Brien omits one "Evidence" chapter, as suggested by the fact that there are only seven of these chapters as opposed to eight of the other types. By doing so, he urges readers to pay attention to the Vietnam War beyond the pages of the novel and to hear the voices of veterans rather than isolating them and denying their experiences. This missing chapter, it seems, may contain the missing thread to connect all of the other stories.

## **2.2 *Realism and Hwang***

*The Shadow of Arms* consists of two stories: Ahn's experience at Da Nang and the Pham brothers' experience in different military groups. In the middle of the Vietnam War, a Korean Corporal, Ahn Yong Gyu, is transferred from the front area to Da Nang, where the black market

flourishes. As the allied forces' criminal investigator, he gets the mission to watch the black market carefully. While investigating it, he becomes disillusioned with the corrupted allied forces that embezzle military supplies to sell them for excessive profits in the Vietnamese market. In addition to Ahn's story, the Vietnamese brothers, Pham Quyen and Phan Mihn, give their own perspectives on the war. Each takes part in different parties during the Vietnam War: Quyen joins the government forces to earn money that will enable him to escape from Vietnam and protect his family; Mihn fights for the National Liberation Forces to protect the Vietnamese people from the foreign powers.

Hwang uses realism in constructing his narrative, although realism in Korean literature means something differently from that in U.S. literary history. According to *Land of Exile: Contemporary Korean Fiction*, Korean modern history influenced the development of realism in Korean literature. As Korea has suffered from Japan's colonization and the Korean War followed by division, as well as military dictatorship and industrialization, Korean realist literature has depicted "the isolation, alienation and frustration of individuals caught in a rigid, stifling social and political structure" (ix). Thus this form of realism is culturally specific: it not only employs what we might call traditional realistic conventions, but is also devoted to finding the real and hidden meaning behind the phenomena produced by the influences and events listed above.

In order to maximize the sense of realism, Hwang employs a dialogic style to give the impression of reportage. Except when Ahn and Pham Mihn think about the rear area in their minds, most of the lines in the novel appear between quotation marks, which gives the impression of a dialogue or a drama script. Instead of conventional description, Hwang's dialogic style makes the reader believe that he or she is overhearing a real story based on fact. Furthermore, Hwang's narrative differs from O'Brien's by excluding the perspectives of

American soldiers as characters during the war. Instead, three chapters introduce the American experience in Vietnam: chapter five, “Concerning the Rape-Murder of a Vietnamese Women”; chapter fifteen, “Report Regarding Misconduct Committed in the Course of an Operation by Company C, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 20<sup>th</sup> Division” regarding My Lai Massacre; and chapter thirty, “Investigation Report on Atrocities by G2 and MID.” As the titles of these chapters suggest, Hwang presents these chapters as reports. Furthermore, in these chapters, no main characters appear, and the events described do not relate directly to the main plot of the novel; instead, they simply disclose the atrocities at the front fighting fields. Although not all American soldiers appear as evil in these chapters, their perspectives are marginalized compared to those of the Korean characters. In chapter five, a soldier called Ericson reveals and regrets his immoral action during the war, but his interrogator does not care whether the American soldiers feel guilty or not about their actions:

Interrogator: This is a case that could turn into an international problem. In any event, once the case is publicized the dignity of US forces, which have been participating in war around world to safeguard freedom and justice, will be greatly stained.... As word of the case might become public, recover the body of the victim immediately to prevent it from being exploited by the enemy for propaganda purposes. (77)

The interrogator praises Ericsson’s confession and imposes severe discipline on the other soldiers; however, this decision is not to punish them for the inhumane behaviors, but to prevent the breakdown of the United States’ image in the world. The words from the investigator also suggest that the anti-Communist objective of the American military hides the real, imperialistic reasons for the United States’ participation in Vietnam. Later, Hwang introduces Ahn, the Korean army investigator, as a character devoted to delving into those reasons.

Not only do the dialogues and the report-style chapters improve the sense of realism, Hwang also scrutinizes what other writers have not considered so that he reveals the real and hidden side of the Vietnam War:

The Vietnam War discourse in America has not been changed; it consists of humanism, the antiwar consciousness, veterans' repentance of war activities, and the interior wounds of American individuals. It seems impossible to interpret the Vietnam War with different approaches such as the causes of the war, the other participants' voices regarding the war, the real role of the America during the war and so on. (Hwang, 1992, 7)<sup>1</sup>

As he says in the preface of *The Shadow of Arms* cited above, Hwang criticizes American Vietnam War narratives because they focus on the traumatized American veterans but not on the victimized Vietnamese; furthermore, he argues that interpreting the Vietnam War as a kind of Cold War overlooks its origins in American imperialism. In order to give voice to this different perspective on the war, these missing points become the main focus in Hwang's narrative.

Ahn figures out another reason for America's participation in Vietnam from the circulation of the American products in the black market at Da Nang. According to James E. Westheider's *The Vietnam War*, this black market really existed during the war:

American goods, either stolen from an American installation or bought cheaply from a corrupt South Vietnamese official or ARVN officer, accounted for much of the merchandise sold by the street vendors... Getting the pilfered items off base was easy because there were so many Vietnamese working on the American installations. The security guards at the gates seldom check them for stolen items. (69)

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<sup>1</sup> The translator of *The Shadow of Arms* did not include Hwang's preface in its Korean version; thus, I translate it into English and cite here.

Based on his service at Da Nang, Hwang depicts this black market in a realistic way: the soldiers in charge of PX steal the military supplies and sell it to the Vietnamese people; they sell those items to the Vietnamese customers and the other army soldiers. As a result, the American, Korean, South Vietnamese, and even North Vietnamese Army can attain the American products. After watching every army's struggle to attain the products and money, Ahn considers the Vietnam War as a materialistic war; in particular, he depicts the PX as the defining aspect of the war:

What is a PX? A Disneyland in a vast tin ware house. A place where an exhausted soldier with a few bloodstained military dollars can buy and possess dreams mass-produced by industrial enterprises. The ducks and rabbits and fairies are replaced by machines and laughter and dances. The wrapping paper and the boxes smell of rich oil and are as beautiful as flowers. ... And the PX brings civilization to the filthy Asian slopeheads who otherwise would go on living in blissful ignorance on a diet of bananas and rice. It teaches them how to quench the thirst and ease the heart with the taste of Coke... Anyone who has ever been intoxicated, even once, by that taste and smell and touch, will carry the memory to his grave. The products ceaselessly create loyal consumers who are at the mercy of the producers. (65-66)

Hwang warns that the American is usurping the Vietnamese market forever: the coke replaces banana and rice; the manufacturing substitutes for stock-breeding and farming. Mihn and his friend watch this phenomenon at the restaurant: when Mihn orders a beverage, the waiter recommends only two kinds, "Coke and the lemonade"; Mihn asks to have the Vietnamese food "*banh mi*," but the waiter says "We don't have any. We do have crepes made from C-rations, though" (30). Their conversation shows how the Vietnamese market changes. PX is the place

where many military supplies are stored for shipment to the combat forces; however, American and other supporting countries send many more supplies than are needed by the combat forces. As a result, the surplus stocks encroach on the indigenous market, so that the domestic economy is reformed into the new model which depends fully on American commodities.

Furthermore, the American products dominate the Vietnamese economy through the “new village construction.” The United States and South Vietnam cooperate on this project, which helps the Vietnamese people to rebuild the towns destroyed by artillery; however, these new towns will work as a market for the American products:

The farmers who never received materials to construct fencing and dwellings had to cut bamboo and wood instead, which turned out to have eaten up more than ten dollars of each farmer’s very limited wealth. The provincial government gave some reasons for the suspensions of supply, citing transportation difficulties and incompleteness in claim documents. As for the weapons, ... about two-thirds of the guns and ammunition was siphoned off into the black market.... The US military flew their helicopters in from all directions and dropped all sorts of things. White ceramic toilet bowls, chocolates ...

They gave marble and yoyos to children suffering from nutritional deficiencies. (265)

This new village fails to reach its expectation. The weapons and money for the new town do not arrive; the trader poaches them in the middle of support. Instead, the useless things are dumped there. In order to make up for the defect of this plan, the officers in charge of this new village plan release the modified project. It also works as America’s market:

For the Vietnamese farmers, the introduction of chemical fertilizers will be a momentous transition. The quantities to be used will gradually increase. Right now, the most serious deficiency in the diet of farm families in Quang Nam Province is protein. To increase

meat intake is indispensable for suppressing the communist threat. One of the essential parts of the phoenix hamlet program is the pig-breeding plan. ... We'll also be supplying beside cement, and fertilizer, surplus agricultural products from America. ... The chief of the education section should see to the assignment of teachers and delivery of textbooks as well as to education priorities aimed at raising able workers... (268-69)

This project looks like humanitarian assistance: fertilizer, medicine, stock-breeding will be provided to those in need. These things seem to help the new town flourish, but Pahn Quyen's awareness of the hidden reason for America's military assistance extends to the meaning of its economic support in new town construction. According to Phan Quyen, U.S. assistance in providing military supplies and education will help America to raise the pro-American leadership in the Vietnam government, ensuring the passage of military and economic policies that will enable the United States to control these forces and natural resources in the future (Hwang 136-7; 1992)<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, the new village plan will make the Vietnamese economy dependent on American supplies and technology because this assistance does not consider the Vietnamese' own traits. Without any investigation of the Vietnamese climate and territory, the United States decides to send the fertilizers used at her farmland to educate people about the farming technology developed in America. Furthermore, the new town's pig-breeding promotion will organize the market for the American products. In the end, America's help hides her original desire to colonize the market with American products.

By describing the rear area of South Vietnam as a U.S. dependent market, Hwang reveals that the Vietnam War occurred not only to suppress Communist influences, but to enable America's economic imperialism over Vietnam:

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<sup>2</sup> Pham Quyen's thoughts are omitted in the translated version; thus, I translated the Korean version in English and referred in this part.

The Americans criticized us for lacking a highly developed government structure, but they should realize this is a situation in which people in Saigon still find it natural to refer to the American ambassador as the ‘Governor General.’ We were a colony until the French armed forces were defeated and withdrew, and even if there are no longer any interventions by the French, we’re now going through a war with the colonial elements still intact in many ways. Today, without the economic support of America, we can’t carry on the war for a single day. (261-62)

Hwang argues that the Vietnam War will result in a Vietnam economically colonized by American capital; along with this, he also considers the Vietnam War as an extension of the First Indochina War. Relying on this perspective, Hwang uses the expression “National Liberation Front” instead of the Viet Cong.

Hwang offers not only a new perspective on America’s participation in the Vietnam War, but also on the Vietnamese people. He considers the Vietnam War as a fratricidal war, focusing on the similarity between the Korean War and the Vietnam War: “Our country is divided, like a body severed in half. My real home is in the North. It was only after I came to Vietnam that I began to see my homeland objectively” (397). The Korean War represents the victory of democracy against Communism; simultaneously, for the Korean people, it divided the one country into two and dispersed family members. The Vietnam War shares a similar pattern: it happened during the Cold War (five years after the end of the Korean War) within the same ethnic group. In the middle of the war, Ahn realizes the Korean soldiers’ ambiguous status, the status between as the American ally or the Asian country sharing the similar war experience. This situation causes the loss of agency during the war; at the same time, his status allows him to see the war from a certain distance so that Hwang tries to objectively describe the war.

When it comes to the Korean soldier's loss of agency in Vietnam, Korean critics have argued that those soldiers were the mercenaries whom the America government hired in order not to sacrifice its people. Hwang also follows this idea: the protagonist Ahn says he comes to Vietnam for money. However, I do not see the Korean army as the mercenaries. According to Choi Young-Ho's "The Critical Analysis of Assertion, ROKA of Participation in the Vietnam War as Mercenary Soldiers<sup>3</sup>," the critics ignore the definition of the mercenary and the other reasons behind the dispatch of Korean Army overseas. The word "mercenary" means one who sacrifices one's life for a large amount of money and follows the command of the person/organization who hires him. Choi argues that the historical facts cannot define the Korean army as the mercenaries. First, the Korean soldiers sacrificed their lives in order to help the ally who supported them during the Korean War. Second, the U.S. government paid the salary of the Korean Army from the second dispatch out of four; because the Korean government could not afford to pay their wages, it asked the U.S. to support financially for the Korean soldiers. Third, the Korean soldiers were not under the command of the U.S.; instead, they conducted their military operations independently or else cooperated with the U.S. army if they needed to do so. From this perspective, I do not call the Korean Army the mercenary for America; since the Korean soldiers fought in Vietnam, Korea promoted its national prestige in the world, improved its national security through the war experience, and rebuilt the economy. Thus, I argue that Korean soldiers felt lost because the Vietnam rear area's corruption deprived them of the original cause of the Vietnam War, which was to fight communism.

The comparison of the two narratives by O'Brien and Hwang implies that the nationalities of the writers differentiate the focus or the interpretation of the Vietnam War.

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<sup>3</sup> Choi Young-Ho's article is written in Korean so I translated it into English.

Through the postmodern style and focus on the massacre, O'Brien recalls the Vietnam War that American society has suppressed and forgotten; his narrative argues that American people as well as the veterans are responsible for the inhumanity during the war. While O'Brien urges his nation to reconsider the meaning of the war, Hwang delves into the hidden cause of the Vietnam War. In his narrative appear the voice of the Korean soldiers and the Vietnamese and the corruption of the war; since the focus on the rear area has not been discussed, he uses realism to make readers believe that what he writes actually happened during the war.

### 3 CHAPTER TWO: FRIENDLY FIRE

According to Kinney's *Friendly Fire: American Images of the Vietnam War*, friendly fire is the main theme in Vietnam War literature produced by American authors. Although friendly fire, in the sense of one soldier inadvertently killing or wounding a fellow soldier, happened during every war, depictions of this type of combat action do not occur nearly as frequently in literature about World War I or World War II as they do in Vietnam War literature. Kinney's book addresses the conspicuous usage of the theme of friendly fire throughout Vietnam War literature; but in focusing only on images of Americans killing Americans, she marginalizes friendly fire as depicted from Vietnamese and Korean perspectives. Since Hwang depicts friendly fire in *The Shadow of Arms*, I will argue that this theme should be discussed not only within American war narratives, but also in depictions of the Vietnam War by Korean writers.

#### 3.1 American Identity

The trope of friendly fire in *In the Lake of the Woods* belongs to the crisis of what Kinney calls, in her first chapter, "John Wayne syndrome." Based on her analysis of various Vietnam War stories, Kinney argues that the image of friendly fire literally describes real war events but also allegorically alludes to the subversion of American subjectivity, which she describes in terms of an attack on the image of John Wayne. In American culture, according to Kinney, the persona of John Wayne<sup>4</sup> as depicted in numerous World War II films represents "ascension to superpower status in World War II based on the concepts of justice, honor and duty" (18). The experience in Vietnam, however, breaks down the John Wayne image; instead,

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<sup>4</sup> In order to explain the popular image of the heroic soldier, the word "persona" should come before the name "John Wayne" because that image is based on the image of the movie characters starred by John Wayne and not referred to his personal character. (Herzog 17-18)

injustice and inhumanity in war lead the American soldiers to fight against not only the Viet Cong, but also the heroic image of John Wayne. In Vietnam War literature, writers reveal this crisis of American subjectivity through plots in which soldiers kill their colleagues or commanders.

In *In the Lake of the Woods*, the John Wayne syndrome is explicit. The similarity between the names John Wade and John Wayne reveals O'Brien's reflection on the latter's image. In addition, John Wade's relationship with his father indicates the popularity of the John Wayne image. John Wade remembers when his father teased him about his shape:

How in fourth grade, when John got a little chubby, his father used to call him *Jiggling John*. It was supposed to be funny. It was supposed to make John stop eating. At the dinner table, if things weren't silent, his father would wiggle his tongue and say, "Holy Christ, look at the kid stuff it in, *old Jiggling John*," then he'd glance over at John's mother, who would say, "Stop it, he's husky, he's not fat at all," and John's father would laugh and say, "Husky my ass." Sometimes it would end there. Other times his father would jerk a thumb at the basement door. "That pansy magic crap. What's wrong with baseball, some regular exercise?" He'd shake his head. "*Blubby little pansy*" (67).

This passage comes right after his father's manly image is fantasized by John: in his mind, his father is a man who is full of leadership, kind to others, and smart enough to give a life lesson—an image that clearly contrasts with John's own unmanly character, a lonely little boy.

Traumatized by his father's teasing, he conjures a mirror in his mind and reflects his ideal John in it; in this mirror, his father listens to his problems and gives him his best answers. Obsessed with seeking his father's love and praise, John thinks that going to Vietnam can help redeem him in his father's eyes, establishing his masculinity. Just as, according to Herzog, American soldiers

went to Vietnam expecting to become John Wayne by “representing traditional American values of patriotism, courage, confidence, and leadership” (19) John imagines experiencing “the belonging and brotherhood” in battle and “returning home as a hero” (*In the Lake of the Woods* 37, 36).

Obsessed with becoming a hero, John Wade creates another version of himself called Sorcerer, the man of innocence who believes that America can “control its own fate and other’s destiny” (Herzog 20). As Sorcerer fights in what he believes is a good and just war, he does not feel guilty on the battlefield:

Sorcerer performed card tricks and rope tricks. He pulled a lighted cigar from his ear. He transformed a pear into an orange. He displayed an ordinary military radio and whispered a few words and made their village disappear. There was a trick to it, which involved artillery and white phosphorus, but the overall effect was spectacular. (65)

Juxtaposing the magic with the artillery fire and the objectified corpse, Sorcerer enjoys the war itself. As his father’s generation did during the Second World War, killing and destroying brings victory and honor to him; however, this Sorcerer replaces John Wayne only when he should face the wreck after the fire or the battle, and this replacement resembles his habit of making a mirror image. As he imagines in the mirror a masculine John whom his father really loves, John acts as another character in order to avoid the inhumanity underlying the war.

As time goes by, Sorcerer feels something wrong with his belief in the John Wayne image; instead of that of the enemy he watches the death of his company members, and soon his magic that kills the enemy or launches the artillery fire does not guarantee any victory on the field:

As they plodded from ville to ville, the men talked in quiet voices about how the magic had worn off, how Sorcerer had lost contact with the spirit world. They seemed to blame him. Nothing direct, just a general standoffishness. There were no more requests for tricks. No banter, no jokes. As the days piled up, John Wade felt increasingly cut off from the men, cut off from Kathy and his own future. A stranded sensation - totally lost.

(39)

Sorcerer's trick of laying down the barrage of artillery becomes useless, just as guerilla warfare disturbed the American soldiers' ability to search for and be confident of targets. Consequently, the fear of an elusive enemy reduced the soldiers' morale and made them doubt the powerful and invulnerable image of America. This crisis of American identity also happened in the continental U.S.; the brutality of the Vietnam War on the screen stirred American society toward political opposition. When John writes to Kathy, her lack of reply reflects this anti-Vietnam War movement. The feeling of lost identity and isolation plays an important role in Sorcerer's murder of Weatherby.

Weatherby and Sorcerer have something in common in that both lack any sense of guilt when killing the enemy. As I mentioned above, Sorcerer glamorizes the violence of devastating towns with artillery and mortar fire and playing with dead bodies. Weatherby also does not hesitate when shooting the enemy, except that the enemy, at My Lai, gradually comes to include Vietnamese noncombatants:

[Sorcerer] saw mothers huddled over their children, all the frazzled brown faces....

Impossible, Sorcerer told himself, but the colors were very bright and real.... PFC

Weatherby rattled off twenty rounds and wiped his rifle and reloaded and leaned over the ditch and wiped his rifle and stood straight and kept firing. It went on and on. Sorcerer

watched a red tracer round burn through a child's butt. He watched a woman's head open up. He watched a little boy climb out of the ditch and start to run.... There were splatterings and bits of bone.... Weatherby's weapon kept jamming. He flung the rifle away and borrowed somebody else's and wiped the barrel and thumped in a fresh magazine and knelt down and shot necks and stomachs. Kids were bawling. (214-15)

Unlike other colleagues who are too frightened to aim at people with their guns, Weatherby fires mercilessly without any hesitation. After this atrocity, it appears that Sorcerer deliberately kills Weatherby: "The guy started to smile, but Sorcerer shot him anyway" (110). Why does he fire at his friend? John confesses that he "felt something slip inside him, a falling sensation" (215). This means that he attributes the reason for his friendly fire to the circumstance in which it happens—a massacre of innocent Vietnamese villagers. The place where John kills Weatherby is different from the ones John reports the coordinates for artillery fire. In the military, signal soldiers like Sorcerer are usually located in an artillery observation post some distance from the target zone. This means that they do not see up close the place where many people die as a result of the artillery fire or napalm they have "conjured" up. In short, his distance from villages he helps to bomb, along with his ability to deceive himself, deprives John of any feelings of guilt. At one point he seems to recognize the importance of this distance: "It was a place ... where you could wave your wand and make teeth into toothpaste, civilization into garbage – where you could intone a few syllables over a radio and then sit back to enjoy the spectacle – pure mystery, pure miracle" (72). In contrast, during the My Lai massacre, John watches mass killing closely; before his eyes, his buddies kill the children and the women ruthlessly. My Lai offers John an opportunity to watch the war's atrocity and to realize that Sorcerer represents a vicious American

soldier, not the heroic character he has believed in. Consequently, the falling sensation he feels can be called his guilt and drives John to kill himself as Sorcerer—and to take aim at Weatherby.

Although some might disagree with me and argue that John is so frightened that he mistakes his colleague for a Viet Cong soldier, I argue that John has already recognized that the one he is going to kill is Weatherby. Before pulling his trigger, he hears Weatherby calling him Sorcerer and watches Weatherby's smile; thus, John's friendly fire is intentional and expresses the theme not only of friendly fire, but of what is known as "fragging." Unlike friendly fire, which is accidental, fragging takes place when a soldier deliberately kills one of his fellows, often in response to an order he does not want to carry out. Since those at My Lai were ordered by their commander to kill women and children, John's friendly fire can be regarded as a fragging in response to this order; instead of killing Vietnamese, John kills his colleague who followed the order. As Kinney argues that fragging plots in Vietnam War narratives usually "testif[y] to subversion of traditional American orders of meaning" (4), John's fragging also poses a question about the perversion of authority and order.

By this logic, John's friendly fire also relates to one of the hypotheses regarding Kathy's disappearance—specifically, the possibility that John might have killed her. In trying to remember the last time he saw Kathy, John's memories overlap with the circumstances he experienced at My Lai. At the cottage in Minnesota, John feels that "dank odor" and "fleshly scalding smell" fill the room; in addition, he fills himself with madness, evil, and fury (272-73). This overlapping indicates that John discovers the similarity between two different places. As the distinction between the enemy and the civilian is difficult to make in Vietnam, John cannot tell whether Kathy is friendly or not. John's confusion reflects that of the Vietnam War veterans after the Vietnam War. As I mentioned in the second chapter, Kathy represents an America that wants

to keep the Vietnam War story silent. After coming back from Vietnam, John tries to confess his participation in the massacre to his wife, but she avoids talking about it:

John put the hamburgers on a platter. Kathy dumped on the onions. She seemed nervous, as if she were aware of certain truths but could not bear to know what she knew, which was in the nature of their love....

“Kath, listen, I need to *tell* you this. Something’s wrong, I’ve *done* things.”

“It doesn’t matter.”

“It does.” ...

“Christ, you’re not –”

She picked up the hamburger platter. “We’ll be fine. Totally fine.” (74)

American society’s apathy about what went on there appears in the narrative as a possible unconscious reason for John’s killing of Kathy. However, whether he kills her or not remains unclear. If O’Brien makes it possible to believe the plot that John kills Kathy, he may be trying to alert the reader to the hostility felt by veterans toward people who refuse to hear their stories. At the same time, by refusing to make clear that John actually committed this murder, O’Brien also intends to focus the readers’ attention on the mystery so that they will continue discussing the Vietnam War.

Although the killing of Weatherby and possibly Kathy subverts the traditional image of the American soldier, those acts of friendly fire do not result in the complete death of that image; instead, O’Brien also suggests the possibility of a renewed John Wayne image through redemptive acts. At the end of the novel, John rides a boat to search for his wife. Despite having no idea about Kathy’s whereabouts, he goes straight north, to the Northwest Angle juts. In the chapter “The Nature of the Angle,” that place appears as wilderness: “A geographical orphan,

stranded by a mapmaker's error ... a remote spit of woods ... in the deep unbroken solitude" (286). This description reminds the reader of the western expansion of American territory and the pioneer spirit embodied by celebrated images of the American past. Kinney suggests a possible connection between John's journey to the North and America's identity through westward movement in the past:

John Wayne's nostalgic embodiment of winning the West and World War II powerfully elides what came between, the imperial histories of the United States' quest for hegemony in the Pacific.... But the obsession with John Wayne in Vietnam War literature, the need to revisit Indian Country, also points powerfully and disturbingly to the half-forgotten connections between the West, World War II and Vietnam. (42)

Based on this idea, Kinney argues that Cacciato's journey from Vietnam to Paris in O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* similarly reveals America's desire for exceptionalism, referring to Paris as the city where America entered with victory during WWII. Yet in her book *Vietnam and Beyond: Tim O'Brien and the Power of Storytelling*, Stefania Ciocia argues against the idea of finding a connection between American identity and North Angle in *In the Lake of the Woods*; instead, she refers to the mystic setting of Minnesota and argues that the incomprehensible landscape reflects anxieties and doubts rather than "the pioneer's faith in the unstoppable march of progress" (94). Furthermore, Ciocia also argues that Minnesota shares a similar symbolic landscape with Vietnam that gives no hope to John and Kathy.

In contrast to Kinney and Ciocia, however, I draw on O'Brien's first line of the last chapter: "If all is supposition, if ending is air, then why not happiness?" (299). Until Kathy disappears at night, John has suffered from the trauma caused by the war and his defeat in the election. After that night, he says he feels better: "A miserable night, nothing else, so he'd

apologize and then prove to her that he was back in control. A solid citizen. Upright and virtuous” (78). In order to find her, he cooperates with police, searches for her by himself, and gets on a boat alone toward the isolated area; this hardworking husband demonstrates the traditional man’s duty to protect his people and nation. John’s action reveals the possibility of returning to his image of justice in the past; but given his ability to deceive himself, the reader must also be suspicious of his reasons for these activities. O’Brien’s refusal to make clear what happens to Kathy makes it impossible to settle on an optimistic or pessimistic reading.

### **3.2 *Three Friendly Fires in The Shadow of Arms***

Hwang also depicts the trope of friendly fire in *The Shadow of Arms*. Before discussing it, however, I need to redefine friendly fire in the context of Hwang’s novel. Set in the rear area of the war, away from the battlefield, Hwang’s novel focuses not only on scenes of killing or violence in the front lines, but also on conversations or the interactions between forces that reveal Hwang’s perspective on the war. In my analysis that follows, the “friendly” fire includes physical killing by guns as well as the oral attack among friendly forces expressed in American to American, America to Korean, inter-Vietnam relationships. Expanding the scope of friendly fire in this way will help to understand the difference between the perspectives of Hwang and O’Brien.

#### **3.2.1 *America and America***

Hwang depicts friendly fire between Americans in three ways: through Ericsson’s testimony in the rape-murder case report; through testimonies between American soldiers in the My Lai massacre report; and through the death of Stapley. In the first report of America’s

operation, Private First Class Ericsson discloses that his platoon members raped and murdered a Vietnamese woman. According to his testimony, his colleagues threatened to conspire together:

Ericsson: Misova ordered me to get rid of her. He threatened me, said if I refused, he'd report me as killed in action. ... The only thing that could prevent me from carrying out my resolution would be if I became a casualty at the hands of my own unit. In fact, Misova and Clark fired at me twice when we were out on reconnaissance. (75-76)

Ericsson says that he could neither rape nor kill her because his wife and that Vietnamese woman overlapped one another; however, without any hesitation, his fellows raped and killed a female Vietnamese civilian. Furthermore, in order to keep what they did, they threatened Ericsson by the gun and falsely reported that they killed a female guerilla during the reconnaissance. Since that massacre happened, Ericsson's mind conflicted between guilt and loyalty to the brotherhood; in the end he decides to reveal the story. At the fear of being exposed, his colleagues threaten him at gunpoint. In this case, none of the soldiers except Ericsson feel any guilt and use the threat of friendly fire to keep the rape secret. Combined with the rape itself, this threat of friendly fire clearly emphasizes the brutality and viciousness of the American soldiers. In Chapter 15, "Report Regarding Misconduct Committed in the Course of an Operation by Company C, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 20<sup>th</sup> Division," friendly fire again reveals the same image of the American soldier. In making his report on the My Lai massacre, Carter, one of the American company members, blames his commander:

Carter: As [we] entered My Lai ... we found a woman and someone had forced her down on the ground. Capt. Medina shot her with his M16. I saw the scene from about fifty feet away. There was no need to shoot her. Then we ran into a soldier who had rounded up about twenty Vietnamese – men, women, and children – and Medina ordered the soldier

to “kill them all, down to the last one.” Later Medina caught a boy of about seventeen who was driving a water buffalo. He yelled at the boy to run away, but the boy just stood there. Then Medina just started firing at the boy with his rifle.

[At this point the CID investigator warned Carter that he was making grave accusations against his commanding officer, but Carter insisted upon continuing.] (205)

Carter’s disclosure belongs to a redefined notion of friendly fire. In this report, he does not shoot his commander by gun; instead, he ignores the CID officer and discloses his commander’s misconduct. Carter’s disclosure resembles the act of fragging, which is “the intentional murder of superior officers” (Kinney 4). Focusing on fragging as a means of disobeying an order, I will call the breakdown of the rank and discipline an act of symbolic fragging; however, Carter’s fragging does not represent the same allegorical meaning as expressed in Kinney’s book. While she considers fragging a crisis of American identity, Hwang uses fragging to reveal the inhumanity of American soldiers. Although Carter’s disclosure might be regarded as an act of heroism or bravery, he also engages in the massacre and he omits his misconducts in his account, concentrating only on the faults of his commander. By doing so, he avoids his responsibility for committing murder by invoking the rule of the Army: his commander is wholly responsible for this massacre because he ordered it to be committed by his soldiers. Hwang’s representation of several other soldier testimonies similarly expresses little self-reflection or guilt on the part of American soldiers. Even the CID investigator does not focus on the moral or humanitarian implications of what happened in My Lai; rather, his focus lies solely on military discipline. By characterizing American soldiers as being irresponsible toward their brutality, Hwang portrays the United States as the offender in Vietnam.

In addition, Hwang introduces another American soldier called Stapley who does not appear as the offender like the CID investigator above. Stapley goes AWOL in order to return to America or flee to the third-world countries because the way the American soldiers fight disappoints and horrifies him. When talking about the war with Ahn, Stapley criticizes America's usage of illegitimate weapons such as napalm and white phosphorous shells: "[those weapons] violate the Geneva convention rules on weapons of war. Sitting up in my helicopter, I've seen countless bombs explode, shelling saturating the landscape, razing villages and annihilating people" (398). Furthermore, he says he could not bear the inhumane action of his colleagues: "The M60 machine gunners call themselves 'monkey hunters.' ... they think [of shooting and killing the Vietnamese] as an entertaining sport to spot targets and take them out" (398). His lines indicate that Stapley denies America's unjust image in Vietnam; Stapley reminds the reader of O'Brien's John Wade, who gets shocked at Weatherby's brutal mass killing. Although John shoots Weatherby, Stapley's life ends differently from that of John. With the help by Ahn and others, Stapley achieves the chance to get aboard the ship to Saigon in order to run away from the Vietnam War; however, his effort ends in vain. When he passes the guard post at the entrance to the pier, American guards get suspicious and try to hold him. Although he runs toward the pier, the guards shoot him to death. While John's killing Weatherby in *In the Lake of the Woods* implies the hope for a righteous image of America, the death of Stapley, in contrast, insinuates that America cannot escape its atrocious image in Vietnam. In the end, the testimonies of the American army in the report and the death of Stapley emphasize this brutal image of America during the Vietnam War.

### 3.2.2 *Korea, between the U.S. and Vietnam*

As the U.S. and Korea were allies during the Vietnam War, killing of one by the other would constitute a form of friendly fire. Yet although literal shooting and killing of Koreans by Americans, or vice versa, does not appear in Hwang's novel, Hwang introduces oral friendly fire here through the sarcastic exchange of words between U.S. and Korean soldiers:

As I work with Americans, the one thing I hate most is to listen to you people say how alike we are, how I'm no different from an American, and other garbage like that. In the same breath I hear you guys whispering how filthy the Vietnamese gooks are. 'Gook' is the label American soldiers picked up in the Korean War from the word 'Han-guk,' mispronouncing it 'Han-gook.' Americans used it to make fun of us. (399)

Here, Ahn feels confused as a result of his unclear relationship with the American army.

American soldiers used the slang "gook," which deprecates the Korean people. Whenever he hears those words, Ahn wonders whether the American army sees the Korean through the image of "gook," and thus an enemy like the Viet Cong. America's dual and opposing attitude with regard to him and other Koreans appears throughout the novel.

In particular, Ahn's identity as part of the allied force begins to collapse when he transfers from the front to the rear area. He needs to ride a bus to arrive at the station for new troops, so tries to get on an army bus. The bus driver, however, refuses to allow him to ride:

[Driver :] "You aren't allowed."

[Ahn: ] "I work for the Allied Forces."

[Driver :] "This bus is for Americans only."

[Ahn: ] "We're part of the same unit."

[Driver: ] "I don't know that. Now get the hell off."

... [Ahn] “We came here because you people asked us to.”

...major rose from the seat, saying, “Careful, soldier. We’re all comrade-in-arms.”

... [Ahn:] “This driver is my enemy!” (79-80)

Friendly fire appears as the driver’s refusal to allow Ahn to ride. Despite Ahn’s continuous assertion of his allied status, the bus driver cannot accept him because of how he looks. Ahn feels confused because Americans, who asked Koreans to serve as allies, do not know recognize his participation. Moreover, the other soldiers on the bus and even higher rank officers do not recognize Ahn’s status as an ally. Although the major accepts him as a soldier in war and fears the gun in Ahn’s hand, he does not consider him a true ally. Here, Ahn falls into a dilemma: the United States, which suggested an alliance with South Korea, denies recognition of her own allies in Vietnam. As a result, Ahn feels betrayed by the American soldier’s refusal of recognition and shoots his gun in order to express his anger, though without harming anyone.

When Ahn introduces himself to the American officers after transferring to the rear area, the reason why American soldiers do not accept him as an ally becomes clear. While talking with Ahn, Major Krapensky utters a joke based on his experience in Korea:

[Major Krapensky] “The French and the British may look alike to you. Likewise, I can’t tell the difference between you people and the Vietnamese.”

[Ahn:] “Anyway, we’ve come here for the same purpose, right?”

At those words from the captain [who translates Ahn’s words], the major shook his head and laughed, “No, you came [to Vietnam] to make money. I’m joking, don’t take it the wrong way ...”

Yong Kyu gathered his words in his head before he opened his mouth. “The allied forces always have only one purpose” (68).

According to Major Krapensky, the ethnic similarity between Vietnamese and Korean people confuses Americans, so that they feel difficulty in recognizing Koreans as friendly forces. In the context of the guerilla warfare in Vietnam, this confusion plays into the U.S. soldiers' trauma about being unable to recognize the enemy, the Viet Cong. Since they couldn't distinguish enemy from civilian, the similar appearance of Asian people might keep U.S. soldiers suspicious about whom they could trust, even in the rear areas of the war. In addition, the Major's words indicate an issue separate from that of the impact of guerrilla warfare on American soldiers' perceptions. In stating that that the Korean Army comes to Vietnam for money, the Major introduces a topic that does not appear at all in American Vietnam War discourse, but which is very important in Korean discourses on this war. This is the idea that both Korean and American activities in Vietnam were guided by economic and mercenary aims. Instead of using Ahn's voice, Hwang uses the Major's to deliver this theme, suggesting that he is revealing the underlying secret that really makes Korea and the United States allies. Major's words draw the line between both soldier's purposes, breaking down Ahn's reason for being in Vietnam while emphasizing that Americans are fighting for "anti-communist" reasons; however, his sarcastic tone discloses the fact that the United States has hidden its economic avarice under the sacrifice of soldiers fighting at the front.

At the loss of his identity as an ally, Ahn begins to identify himself with the Vietnamese—a process made possible by the fact that he is well aware of both nations' similar histories; however, he fails to find his lost identity when he talked with Toy who works for the Korean branch of the investigation division and becomes a close friend of Yong Kyu:

He fails, however, to find his lost identity in this way:

[Toy:] “Perhaps you won’t get [the core of the black market] until the end. So much better for you. For after all, this is our country and this is our war. We are the masters of the house. You people just serve your time and go back home.”

[Ahn:] “So what is this war of yours about? The Americans and we came here for no reason?”

[Toy:] “You people have no part in it. This is an American taxpayers’ war.”

[Ahn:] “Cut the bullshit. For six months I was crawling in the mud where you’ve never been.” (117-8)

Toy says that the Vietnam War belongs only to the Vietnamese and the American taxpayers. Working at the rear area, Toy also realizes that America’s commodities and capital have come to dominate the Vietnamese market. From Toy’s viewpoint, Korea is not involved in that imperialistic domination and so this war is not related to Korea as a nation; furthermore, Toy does not recognize the Korean soldiers’ sacrifice in the front area because his focus lies on the black market at the rear area. Toy’s excluding Ahn from the war drives Ahn to consider his military service as a waste of time; thus, he is caught between identifying with the United States and Vietnam, and is able to fully identify with neither.

### 3.2.3 *Vietnamese and Vietnamese*

Although Americans have called the war in Vietnam “the Vietnam War,” many in Vietnam regard it as the American War and attribute it to the invasion of a foreign power that victimized the Vietnamese people. Hwang supports this perspective in his novel. Although O’Brien also describes familial relationships in his narrative, those families consist exclusively of American people; Hwang’s novel, however, focuses on Vietnamese family relationships so

that he allows readers to interpret the Vietnam War as a fratricidal war. Among the Vietnamese characters in his narrative, two main characters convey this viewpoint: Pham Quyen and Pham Mihn are brothers but participate in different forces. Pham Quyen joins the government army (or South Vietnam) whereas Pham Mihn, the National Liberation Force (or North Vietnam/Viet Cong). Despite the absence of shooting between Quyen and Mihn, the same family member's participating in opposing forces can be connected with the image of friendly fire.

Although they do not fight face to face, each attacks the opposite's party and begins to wonder why the Vietnamese people have been divided into two and fight each other. Quyen and Mihn believe that they do this to protect their friends and family, but their experience reveals that each party fails to protect its country and people. One of Quyen's friends gets arrested by the government forces because he attends a reading club held by the Liberation Force. After suffering from torture, he becomes insane. Shocked at the fact that Vietnamese government torments its people rather than protects them, Quyen concludes that the war in Vietnam cannot save his country and people. In order not to be hurt and hurt his loved ones, he decides to save money and sneak out of the country.

Mihn also doubts the cause of the war. During his training at the National Liberation Front, he listens to a lecture concerning its tactics and strategy. The veteran instructor explains how the guerrillas achieved their victory in urban and rural areas. In the middle of the lecture, Mihn raises his hand and asks a question he has carried with him since his college days:

I have a few questions, sir. During the last offensive I was in Hue. Of course, I think the occupation of Hue by the Liberation Front was a brilliant victory. I have no doubt whatsoever that it advanced the national struggle. But, a few days earlier, I saw a bomb go off in front of the inter-city bus terminal in Hue. The target seemed to be the waiting

room of a nearby police checkpoint, but buses standing nearby were destroyed. I saw four children's bloody corpses thrown on the concrete, and women drenched in blood were wailing. (216)

Mihn has thought of guerilla warfare as a means to protect the innocent Vietnamese people from the enemy; however, he realizes that guerilla warfare involves the sacrifice of those people. Since the guerilla does not work ideally, Mihn argues that his party should use guerilla tactics only when they can avoid the death of innocent people. Puzzled by his question, the lecturer answers: "sometimes the damage can be worse than that inflicted by the enemy.... However, our Liberation Front considers that all our people, whether they want to or not, are participants in this struggle on a national scale. They died in action for the sake of a new history in Vietnam" (216). This instructor justifies their actions because, he says, the death of the non-combatants is unavoidable during the war. His justification fails to answer Mihn's lifetime question; furthermore, this unsolved question confuses him because the guerilla kills the innocent people as the enemy forces do. Focusing on the similarity between his party and the enemy, Mihn feels the distinction between them blur. Consequently, this friendly fire, or Vietnamese killing Vietnamese, confuses him in his quest to find the cause of the war. In the end, the Vietnamese's friendly fire in this novel not only reflects the conflict between North and South Vietnam but also represents the victimization of the family and the innocent Vietnamese people, breaking down the brothers' belief in the war.

The theme of friendly fire appears on both novels I have analyzed; however, each writer delivers different messages through this theme. In *In the Lake of the Woods*, O'Brien attempts to restore a more just image of America after My Lai through John's killing of Weatherby, who feels no guilt at murdering the civilian Vietnamese. Although O'Brien keeps Kathy's

disappearance as mystery, John's probable killing of Kathy as well as his likely effort to save her also implies the writer's expectation about the revival of justice in America. In contrast, Hwang suggests new perspectives about the Vietnam War through various acts of friendly fire in his novel. Friendly fire in his novel occurs not only the relationship between Americans, but also between allies and between Vietnamese forces, broadening the discourse on the way by indicating that the Vietnam War was fought within the same ethnic group and was thus a fratricidal war.

#### 4 CHAPTER THREE: THE MY LAI MASSACRE

The My Lai massacre is now well-known throughout the world: on March 16, 1968, the American soldiers in Charlie Company under the command of Lieutenant William Calley murdered hundreds of noncombatants, most of them women and children, at the hamlet called Son My, the name of which appears as My Lai on the U.S. military map. When the newspapers spread reports of this murder, many people believed it as a rumor; however, it turned out to be true and at the My Lai massacre court-martial, Lieutenant Calley was sentenced to life imprisonment (though he was eventually pardoned). This massacre court martial appears in both O'Brien's and Hwang's novels: O'Brien adds in the Evidence chapters excerpts from the Peers Commission investigation of the My Lai massacre and from the court martial of Lieutenant Calley, while Hwang inserts a report on the My Lai massacre court martial as one chapter into his book. Both writers, however, teach different lessons through representing the same event.

American writers have avoided mentioning the My Lai massacre in their works. According to Kendrick Oliver's *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory*, America has been concerned in Vietnam War discourse mainly with "the treatment of US veterans, not the violence upon the Vietnamese" (4). America's solipsism contributed to the exploitation of Vietnam during the war, and this solipsism continued afterward and resulted in little concern for the violence suffered by the Vietnamese people. O'Brien's narratives rely on concern for the suffering of the Vietnamese. Particularly in *In the Lake of the Woods*, John Wade suffers from the trauma caused by his My Lai experience, and he fails to escape from the My Lai massacre even though he fabricates his military records and tries to repress his memory of Vietnam. Furthermore, O'Brien highlights that the My Lai massacre actually happened in Vietnam with excerpts from investigations, court-martial records and testimonies of C company

members. Despite the fact that the revelation of America's inhumane actions in this massacre resulted in the disrespect for many veterans which I have discussed in previous chapters, O'Brien risks amplifying this result by daring to write on this topic.

In an interview, O'Brien explains that his focus on the My Lai massacre shows his anger and sadness toward the American people who believe that "[the massacre] didn't happen... [E]ven if it did happen, [the Vietnamese] deserve it [because] they're all enemy" (Weiner 31). O'Brien goes on to say that he is trying to challenge those people who still manage to regard war as a "great experience" and an expression of "the American idea of manhood, with adventure" (Weiner 31). In order to warn American society ignorant about the atrocities of the Vietnam War, O'Brien describes the My Lai massacre horrifically in *In the Lake of the Woods*. In his article "My Lai, Flies, and Beelzebub in Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*," David J. Piwinski asserts that O'Brien creates "a powerfully disturbing symbol of the human capacity for evil in war" by connecting Beelzebub, a devil in the Old Testaments with fly imagery in O'Brien's description of My Lai. Especially in the "Evidence" chapters, the testimonies of Thinbill, John Wade's battle buddy in Vietnam, consist only of his obsession with flies at My Lai: "All I remember now is flies. And the stink. Some of the guys made these gas masks – dunked their T-shirts in mosquito juice and Kool-Aid. That helped a little, but it didn't help with the flies. I can't stop dreaming about them. You think I'm crazy? (138). In addition, Piwinski argues that the testimonies of the soldiers at My Lai in the "Evidence" chapters cannot reduce the guilt they feel for participating in the massacre. Although those soldiers attribute the mass murder to their revenge for killed fellow soldiers, fear of the Viet Cong, or obedience to their military orders, John Wade's life makes their excuses useless: his attempts to fabricate his military records and war memory through mirror and magic fail to repress the atrocities he sees in the My Lai

massacre. Consequently, as Piwinski says, O'Brien delineates the massacre as "inexcusable and inexplicable" (237).

Furthermore, O'Brien argues that America's amnesia about war atrocities is not limited to the Vietnam War. In the "Evidence" chapters, soldiers' testimonies regarding the American revolutionary war and the battle against the Native Americans at Sand Creek reveal how Americans conceal their cruel actions throughout history. Although American people remember the revolutionary war as a victorious event for independence and the expansion to the West as a realization of the frontier spirit, the records by the witnesses inform readers about the brutality committed by the American people. An excerpt from *Massacres of the Mountains* concerning the battle at Sand Creek says General Edward Ord "encouraged the troops to capture and root out the Apache by every means, and to hunt them as they would wild animals" (260); an anonymous British infantry man's letter reveals the American soldiers were "as bad as the Indians for scalping and cutting the dead men's ears and noses off" (259). These records emphasize that the United States has forgotten the inhumanity of American soldiers in the past.

In addition, O'Brien introduces these previous war stories when depicting the My Lai massacre testimonies. For example, a British officer's description of the American troops looks similar to the American soldiers' description of the Viet Cong in Vietnam: the British infantry man says "[American colonists] did not fight us like a regular army, only like savages, behind trees and stone walls, and out of the woods and houses" (259). By alternately juxtaposing past war records with those of the Vietnam War, O'Brien overlaps not only the actions of the British colonials in the revolutionary war with those of the American soldiers in the Vietnam War, but also the actions of the American soldiers in the past with those of the Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. By this overlapping, O'Brien argues that conditions of guerilla warfare cannot

justify the massacre; rather, he reveals not only the repeated atrocities America has committed during the battle, but also the rampant horror on every battle field. In her book, *The Critical Companion to Tim O'Brien: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*, Susan Elizabeth Farrell mentions that “it is a mistake to see the My Lai Massacre as simply an aberration in American history, as the product of a few bad seeds in an otherwise novel effort to ward off communism in Southeast Asia. While it may be convenient to forget or downplay the details, America has a bloody and violent past” (132). In the end, O’Brien argues that America should not avoid mentioning the My Lai massacre; in contrast, he urges American society to remember what happened in the massacre and not to repeat the same atrocities in the future.

Hwang represents the My Lai massacre differently. While *The Shadow of Arms* focuses on the corrupted soldiers in the rear Vietnam area, Hwang inserts, seemingly out of context, the My Lai massacre court-martial report in which the U.S. soldiers deny their atrocities and make excuses to avoid their responsibilities. Hwang neither introduces any traumatized soldiers like John Wade in *In the Lake of the Woods* nor connects the massacre story to the main plots of his novel. This separation highlights the rear area officers’ indifference to any moral code and reinforces the idea that they are merely obsessed with the money; at the same time, by juxtaposing the front line soldiers’ brutality with the rear area’s corruption, Hwang makes readers wonder again about the reasons for Korea’s participation in the war.

Since he sees the War in Vietnam as America’s hegemonic war, the description of the massacre focuses on the victimized Vietnamese and the perpetrating of violence by American soldiers; however, he does not point out the massacre committed by the Korean army. Although the My Lai massacre became well-known, the massacre perpetrated by the South Korean army is unfamiliar to the much of the world. On February 25, 1968, the Korean Army killed the unarmed

Vietnamese in Ha My village. Korea also did not open a discussion about the massacre; the time when the Korean Army was sent to Vietnam coincides with Korean society's attempt to deal with its internal affairs regarding protests for democracy and economic development in the face of dictatorship, and there was no public forum for discussion of Korea's controversial actions during the war. Later, although the veteran-writers depict their war experiences, they draw on either their fear of guerilla warfare or their lasting war trauma. In my opinion, the reason why they do not mention the Ha My massacre is similar to the reason for America's amnesia about My Lai. In order not to add the unjust image of Korea, its veterans have kept silent on the Ha My massacre. Although Hwang's *The Shadow of Arms* receives attention due to its new perspective on the war and on Korea's interpretation of the Vietnam War, it is in keeping with other Korean war narratives by not depicting Ha My.

Critics have argued that *The Shadow of Arms* expresses Korea's ambivalent status as the offender and the victim during the Vietnam War; however, I think the idea of Korea as the offender is not sufficiently emphasized without mention of the Ha My massacre. In her article "A Research of Novels about the Vietnam War," Jang Yun-Mi refers to Ahn's different attitude toward the death of the American AWOL soldier Stapley and toward that of Toy, the Vietnamese who helps Ahn with his work and becomes close to him. When Stapley gets shot to death by the security forces at the port where he is supposed to get on board to flee to the third nation, Ahn does not feel any pity for him; however, when Toy gets killed by Pham Mihn in the National Liberation Force (or Viet Cong), Ahn feels outrage and seeks revenge on Mihn. The apathy towards Stapley's death lies in Ahn's experiences in the rear area: the American soldiers do not treat him as an ally. Since the United States' desire for economic hegemony in Asia leads him to lose agency in Vietnam, Ahn feels victimized by the American soldiers and thus Stapley's death

does not generate any emotion in him. According to Jang, Ahn's killing of Pham Mihn, by contrast, implies Korea's status as the offender in the war: since Pham Mihn appears as a nationalist who fights against the foreign powers, Ahn's killing of him establishes Korea as one of those foreign powers, making it appear that Korea also acts as offender during the war. However, I think Ahn's action cannot fully explain how Korea served as an offender. In Hwang's narrative, the U.S. appears as the offender because America comes to Vietnam for economic benefits quite apart from its stated efforts to fight communism; at the same time, U.S. soldiers kill the innocent Vietnamese in war. In Hwang's telling of it, Ahn's killing of Mihn does not involve his longing for personal benefits or for victory in war; rather, his action is revenge for his friend's death. As a result, I argue that *The Shadow of Arms* continues to emphasize the idea of Korea as the victim during the Vietnam War. In my opinion, the absence of the Ha My massacre in Hwang's novel indicates the Korean people also avoid discussing this mass murder for the same reasons that American people do.

Should Korea maintain its silence on the Ha My massacre? In order to discuss this, I will introduce Kim Hyun-Sook's article "Korea's Vietnam Question: War Atrocities, National Identity, and Reconciliation in Asia." As Hyun-Sook writes, when the construction of the war memorial in Ha My hamlet became complete, a conflict occurred between the Vietnamese villagers and the Korean veterans. This controversy focuses on the symbolic meaning of that memorial. For the Korean veterans, the absence of their names on the memorial ignores their sacrifice in fighting on behalf of the Vietnamese; in addition, they maintain that the killings at Ha My were not a massacre because they could not tell Viet Cong from the civilians. In contrast, the Vietnamese villagers opposed inscribing the flags of both nations and the names of the Korean veterans on the memorial out of respect for the innocent civilians killed. This conflict

remains unsettled and arguments by both sides reveal that each party has its own perspective on the Vietnam War. As each party stays deaf to the other's views, both will fail to learn the lesson that the war is filled with atrocities. As I have argued, I think every participant in the Vietnam War should bring forth their stories in an effort to prevent the misunderstandings that lead to war occurring again in the future. For Korean soldiers, this story-telling will also help the Korean people to learn the evilness of the war and understand the veterans' sacrifice and pains which Korean society has not appreciated.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Since the Vietnam War ended, veterans returned to their nations and have written of their war experiences. Those stories have not been discussed together; rather, those veterans spread their stories within their nations, and critics have interpreted the war relying on their national background and culture. However, one nation's voice cannot explain every aspect of the Vietnam War because many nations participated in it for different reasons. In order not to marginalize the war stories of other nationalities, a transnational interpretation is necessary to Vietnam War discourse. As I have argued in this thesis, critics should focus on the different stories of America and South Korea. Since both nations allied with each other, their interpretations share more similarities than those between either of them and Vietnam. Despite the fact that America and South Korea were friendly forces, their historical and cultural backgrounds shape different interpretations of the Vietnam War.

Comparing Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods* and Hwang Sok-Yong's *The Shadow of Arms* reveals how America and Korea consider the Vietnam War and its veterans. In order to reflect America's amnesia about Vietnam and veterans' trauma caused by the war, O'Brien adopts postmodernism to blur fact and fiction; this writing style helps him to teach readers that the stigma upon the Vietnam War and its veterans also exists on American people and history and that they cannot escape from unjust images caused by the massacre. In addition, through the theme of friendly fire and the description of the My Lai massacre, O'Brien urges American people to remember the atrocities rampant in the Vietnam War so that they do not repeat these inhumane actions in the future.

Hwang's *The Shadow of Arms* suggests different perspectives by adopting realism and the theme of friendly fire. Since Korea had dual status as both a U.S. ally and an Asian nation

with a history similar to Vietnam's, Hwang unveils the Vietnam War's hidden aspects that other critics have not discussed before. Based on his experience at the corrupted black market in the rear area, Hwang reveals that the Vietnam War represents America's hegemonic war in Asia. At the same time, he overlaps Korea's divided territory and family with Vietnamese brothers' fighting each other in opposite parties; consequently, Hwang points out that the Vietnam War is a fratricidal war.

By comparing those two novels, the Vietnam War discourse in each nation breaks away from its marginalized status, and people can learn the lessons that they have missed. From Hwang's work, American society will learn the fact that Korea participated in the Vietnam War. This war consists of the corrupted market at the rear area as well as the battles on the front line, and the Vietnam War can be interpreted as the war of similar ethnic people. Similarly, O'Brien's novel informs Korean society that suppressing the Vietnam War memories in society will help neither its people nor the veterans; rather, Korean people should learn the atrocities committed in the Ha My massacre and appreciate the veterans' sacrifice so that they will not experience the same thing in the future. In the end, transnational study of the Vietnam War will teach the war lessons each nation's ethnocentric viewpoints have missed before.

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