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**Revisiting the Vietnam War: A Postcolonial Critique of
Assumptions and Captivity Narratives**

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Dedications

To the memory of my grandparents to whom I owe a lot

Abstract

This thesis revisits the Vietnam War through postcolonial lens in order to expose how American captivity narratives have continuously shaped, sustained, and repackaged imperial assumptions about Vietnam. The representation of the Vietnamese is a focal point in this study, which examines the different interpretations of the war and the ways in which Vietnamese are depicted through captivity narratives, with the aim of amplifying the perspectives of the indigenous people. By revisiting the Vietnam War through a postcolonial lens, we are able to challenge the assumptions and narratives that have shaped our understanding of the conflict. This approach not only provides a more nuanced and complex interpretation of the Vietnam War, but also highlights the importance of considering the perspectives of all parties involved in the conflict. It explores how the early protestant faith and puritan captivity narratives continue to influence contemporary captivity narratives, extending beyond personal experiences to that of ideology. This study aims to deconstruct colonial stereotypes embedded in captivity narratives about Vietnam to show that these images legitimized military intervention and America's containment strategy. Through this work, the evolution of the American hero is traced through demonstrating how texts shape and reshaped by the contexts in order to serve the American foreign policy and political agenda. It also explains how the American POWs positioned themselves as heroic figures versus the exotic other, portraying women as sexual objects in need of liberation to justify colonialism and expansion. This research delineates how media coverage of the Vietnam War became one of its key lessons that influenced and shaped the U.S. foreign policy. Readings of captivity narratives further illustrate how narrative healing becomes a contested space, where captives attempt to reclaim agency even as publishers and policymakers appropriate their stories to serve new geopolitical purposes. This study reframes captivity narratives as dynamic instruments of American hegemony: far from innocent adventure tales, they are strategic scripts that adapt to the requisites of any given time and repeatedly reinscribe Vietnam as a space requiring Western tutelage.

Keywords: American Captivity Narratives, Expansion, Ideology, Foreign Policy, the Other, Postcolonialism, Vietnam War

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The history of captivity narratives extends far beyond stories of individuals enslaved in distant or exotic lands; it has been continually constructed and reconstructed in response to shifting historical circumstances. Far from being a marginal genre, captivity narratives have played a significant role in shaping modern geopolitical imaginaries and influencing the ideological contours of the modern world. The story of captivity narrative from its very beginning was crucial and decisive. It shaped the Western view of the Orient and informed colonial policies toward the non-Westerners. The subjugation story of a Westerner in a foreign and unfamiliar land allured and fascinated the Western world to paint a black image of the land of imprisonment. The stories spun by the captives in foreign land, whether fiction or forged, were instrumental in shaping the Western view of the Orient from the Middle Ages to the modern times.

Captivity accounts emerged in England in the course of the Elizabethan reign (1563-1603) with the publication of John Fox's "The Worthy Enterprise of John Fox, in Delivering 266 Christians Out of Captivity of the Turks" in Richard Haklyut's *Principal Navigations* (1589). This early modern Barbary accounts, though taking place in Egypt, was followed by the appearance of a huge number of other narratives. A selection of these narratives was compiled and edited by Daniel J. Vickers and Nabil Matar in their *Piracy, Slavery and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (2001). Among the captivity narratives included in this compilation, one finds Richard Haslestone's "Strange and Wonderful Things Happened to Richard Haslestone...in His Ten Years' Travails in Many Foreign Countries" (1595), John Rawlins's "The Famous and Wonderful Recovery of a Ship

of Bristol, Called the Exchange, from Turkish Pirates of Argier” (1622), and William Okeley’s “Ebenezer, or, A Small Monument of Great Mercy, Appearing in the Miraculous Deliverance by William Oakley” (1675).

According to Paul Baepler, the first captivity by an American captivity entitled “Narrative” was passed by Joshua Gee, a shipwright turned into a tobacco trader seized by Algerian privateers just three years after Mary Rowlandson’s redemption from Indian captivity, and her publication of her captivity account “The Sovereignty and Goodness of God” in 1682. Being essentially anti-generic, another captivity account comes out in Cotton Mather’s sermon “The Glory of Goodness” (1703).¹ Baepler, like Viktus and Matar, gives us a sample of these captivity narratives produced by American captives. Though he emphasizes that the encounter of colonial Americans with the North African privateers in the Mediterranean basin was as old as that of the British subjects, most of the captivity accounts that he has selected for his anthology happened in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The reason for the prominence of the American Barbary captivity narratives at this specific period of American history could be explained in terms of the hostage crisis resulting from the seizure of the two American vessels, the *Maria* and the *Dauphin* in 1785, and other vessels in 1793 with a total of 119 prisoners of the American hostages in Algiers, and the Tripolitan crisis following up the redemption of the American hostages from the Algiers bagnio in 1796 enabled the production and the national popularity of captivity

accounts in America up to the 1820s and after with the appearance of the Abolitionist movement in the American political scene.

Barbary captivity narratives did not flourish in the United States until the early nineteenth century. During these years, Barbary captivity narratives emerged to depict the captives' lives and sufferings in North Africa. The American government, with its funding problems as a young nation not only was forced to free the captives by paying ransom funds, but also to build its own fleet in order to assert itself against its rivals.² The narratives relate the sufferings and miserable conditions of the captives to convince the American government to pay the funds. The United States was very sensitive to Barbary captivity narratives because it has just won independence from Britain. After the independence, America established itself as a template for the rest of the world. The captives viewed themselves as the defenders of democracy against the tyranny of their captors. An American in Tripoli observes: "how delightful it was to see the stars and stripes holding forth the hand of retributive justice to the barbarians, and rescuing the unfortunate, even of distant but friendly European nations, from slavery."³ This statement reinforces the idea that the American captives believe in the civilising mission. John Foss in his famous narrative claims that America is the ideal of liberty that the other countries have to follow. He believes that though they were slaves, they were gentlemen, "the American people must be the best in the world to be so human and generous to their countrymen in slavery."⁴

Over 4,000 Americans were captured during World War I and more than 130,000 were taken prisoner during World War II. The American public knew little of their plight. But

Americans were painfully aware of the 726 who were prisoners of war in Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, American prisoners were a focus of public attention as never before. The North Vietnamese paraded them in a sophisticated propaganda campaign to erode public support for the war. POW (prisoners of war) families launched awareness campaigns. Thousands of Americans donned simple bracelets engraved with the names, ranks, and dates of loss of U.S. soldiers who were prisoners of war or missing in action in Vietnam, and the media gave the POW situation extensive coverage.

According to the prisoners, conditions were appalling: they were variously isolated, starved, beaten, and tortured. They endured pain and psychological deprivation, often for years on end, but they resolutely resisted their captors. Some prisoners played mind games to keep themselves sane, making mental lists or building imaginary houses, one nail at a time. They drew strength from one another, secretly communicating via subtle hand gestures or code tapped out on their cell walls. The media had an immense effect on many individuals during the war. The public were informed about the war's progress through media, television, and newspapers. Thus, whatever the media portrayed was that the public believed, but this didn't necessarily agree with what the soldier actually experienced. Many veterans were profoundly affected by the Vietnam War after they left. It changed their sense of identity and perspective of society. The various social, moral, and psychological conflicts that they encountered in Vietnam changed their life. Upon returning home, the veteran felt a sense of uncertainty and alienation from himself and society due to the culture shock that

he lived there. Many veterans experienced post-traumatic disorder (PTSD) as they faced discrimination, leading to feelings of isolation and abandonment.

Unlike captives of Barbary, the POWs were not considered heroes and they were not welcomed as the prodigal son. The returned soldiers felt ashamed to come back to America because of the failure of the war itself. For many Americans, the war in Vietnam is a bad memory; it was the most unpopular war in their history. At home, the U.S. was split in two, as protests against the war turned angry and sometimes violent. It led to the downfall of one president and helped bring down another. Media coverage during the Vietnam War, especially, demonstrated the ability of media to change public perceptions and feelings about war in general and the country's involvement in war. The Vietnam War therefore marked a turning point in the nature of news coverage of war. This is yet another legacy of the Vietnam War which remains relevant today. The American perspective of the Vietnam War or American War as it is called in Vietnam can be well illustrated through people urge to end the wasted war which was on TV screens in every single American house.

Millions of Vietnamese and 58,000 Americans lost their lives in a distant war few people understood. For the thousands of families who had to flee their homes in Vietnam and leave for the U.S., the war brings back memories of horror and loss. For many Americans, Vietnam is a bad memory because it is the war they lost. In other words, the U.S. did not always achieve all their goals and plans. In Vietnam, they could not overthrow communism and prevent Vietnam from becoming a communist country. Today, Americans still remember the vivid images they saw on TV, a war that split families in Vietnam and at

home. They still remember the horrors of war and most importantly the young Americans were enlisted in the war and left their homes unwillingly to come back home disoriented and rejected. It still has an effect on their lives and their government. Most of all, the war they lost changed the way they look at war itself.

According to historians, the Vietnam War was a personal failure on a national scale. From its beginnings, through the bloodiest, darkest days and finally to the bitter end, the ten-year period of American history is a national disgrace. “Imagine if you had just graduated out of high school and were sent to guerrilla warfare far away from your home. During the war, you were exposed to a lot of stress, confusion, anxiety, pain, and hatred.”⁵ From interviews and studies conducted on Vietnam veterans, the overall consensus is that the American soldiers both despised and feared the Vietnamese. Race was a critical factor affecting both the military and social experiences of American troops in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War, or the American War as it is known in Vietnam, has inspired a wide range of academic research and exploration across various fields. Academic debates about the war reflect broader tensions regarding memory, national identity, and imperialism. Early historical narratives, such as Stanley Karnow’s *Vietnam: A History* (1983), contextualized the war within the framework of the Cold War and highlighted the American political misjudgment and strategic failure. Karnow examines how the United States became increasingly involved in the war and underscored the shortcomings of policymakers. However, similar to earlier accounts, his narrative lacks attention to Vietnamese perspectives.⁶

A significant change occurred with the work of Fredrik Logevall, particularly in *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam* (2012), where he argues that American intervention cannot be comprehended without considering the enduring effects of French colonialism. Logevall traces the origins of the conflict back to the First Indochina War, and illustrated how the Vietnamese quest for independence was misread by U.S. leaders as part of a global communist conspiracy, rather than a nationalist movement. His research challenges the Cold War perspective and places Vietnamese resistance at the center of the narrative.⁷

Postcolonial perspectives brought a necessary shift by centering Vietnamese voices. Viet Thanh Nguyen, in *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (2016), argues that memory production has been dominated by the U.S., and that this “industrialization of memory” led to the marginalization of the Vietnamese experience and voices. He introduced the concept of “just memory,” which involves the recognition of both sides’ suffering without equating or erasing power imbalances. Nguyen critiques how American films and literature often turn Vietnamese people into background figures, denying them historical agency. His work also explores how memory serves nationalism, war ideology, and racial hierarchy.⁸

Building on this, Christina Schwenkel, in *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation* (2009), uses ethnographic research to examine how the war is commemorated in Vietnam, particularly in museums and memorials. She contends that Vietnamese war memory is shaped both by official

government narratives and local practices, and that these often resist the victimhood frame imposed by Western observers. Her research challenges the assumption that Vietnamese memory is monolithic or ideologically fixed, highlighting instead the negotiation between trauma, nationalism, and transnational influence.⁹

It becomes evident that while numerous scholars have examined the Vietnam War from a wide range of perspectives, none have approached the topic in the specific way this research proposes. Thus, this study sets itself apart by critically engaging with the intersection of captivity narratives and the ideological assumptions they carry. A postcolonial critique of these narratives offers a valuable framework for reexamining the legacy of the Vietnam War beyond the U.S.-focused historical narrative. It opens space to consider how literature and media contribute to the cultural logic of expansionist power, and how these narratives continue to shape contemporary understandings of war, identity, and resistance. Eventually, this challenges conventional war memory and advocates for a more nuanced, inclusive, and ethically responsible revision of the Vietnam War from both sides of the conflict.

Postcolonialism is a theoretical framework that examines the cultural, political, and psychological effects of colonialism and imperialism on both colonized and colonizing nations. It delves into how colonial powers enforced their values, identities, and knowledge systems on indigenous populations, often portraying them as inferior or uncivilized to justify colonialism. Key concepts within postcolonialism include “othering”, hybridity, mimicry, and subalternity. Scholars like Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak

have played significant roles in shaping this field. Postcolonialism critically examines Eurocentric historical narratives , challenges lingering ideologies of empire, and aims to empower colonized people by restoring their agency, voice, and cultural identity of in both literature and history.

The Vietnam War has long been narrated through predominantly Western and especially American perspectives, often marginalizing or silencing the voices of the Vietnamese people. These stories frequently portray the Vietnamese as cruel or uncivilized, reinforcing colonial binaries of civilization versus savagery. Such representations not only obscure the historical and political complexities of the war but also reproduce ideological assumptions that justify foreign intervention and cultural domination. By focusing on these narratives, this study aims to interrogate the constructed image of the Vietnamese ‘other’ and how it serves broader imperial discourses.

This work aims to study the Vietnam War from a postcolonial lens in order to understand Vietnam after independence. It revisits the assumptions and the interpretations of the war in favour of the American side through the use of captivity narratives to propagate its agenda and foreign policy, studying the way in which power, identity, and representation are constructed in colonial and postcolonial Vietnam and critique the Western and imperialist narratives and interpretations that shaped the world. Through decolonization which is a core concept of postcolonialism, the struggle towards liberation and the challenged dynamics of the war will be explored. The representation of the Vietnamese is a focal point in this study, which examines different interpretations of the

war and how the Vietnamese, through captivity narratives and media, seek to amplify the perspectives of the indigenous people.

It is refutable to say that the Vietnam War remains a deeply contentious and complex chapter in American history, marked by themes of power, conflict, and cultural exchange. However, if the Vietnam War is a lesson to the American government, how has it changed its foreign policy towards its military operations down to its very roots? and how do the prisoners of war narratives present a unique opportunity to explore the dynamics of power and agency in the context of colonialism and warfare? This work seeks to undertake a postcolonial reading of Vietnam war through examining the ways in which these narratives shape and are shaped by broader historical and cultural contexts. By focusing on the power dynamics at play between the American soldiers and the Vietnamese people they encountered, this analysis aims to uncover the complexities of representation and identity the captivity narratives of the Vietnam War. Through a postcolonial lens, we can gain deeper insights into the experiences of soldiers in captivity and the broader implications of colonialism and imperialism on the events and aftermath of the Vietnam War.

On the surface level, the POWs narratives were part of a wide public effort to stir sympathy for the real white captives of the time. This crisis can be qualified as a cultural crisis which threatened the American identity and its ideals of liberty. In both the early republic and the present, this troubling dream is recurrently enmeshed with stories of American captives abroad. Addressed to their home culture, the narratives dealt mainly with their culture shock upon their first encounter with national cultures strikingly different from that of the host

nation. From the early Puritan captivity narratives until modern captivity narratives, this study tries to show how the dehumanization of the other is crucial in the America's containment strategy in Vietnam by justifying the U.S. expansion and desire for more territories.

Through New Historicism, this study seeks to understand how texts shape and are shaped by the context through examining how captivity narratives have shaped and reflected American identity, and defined the nation's values and beliefs. The ways in which these narratives have been used to justify and support American foreign policy decisions will be explored. From the colonial period to the Iraq War, we seek to understand how these narratives have influenced the American psyche and continue to shape perceptions of identity, race, and power dynamics. The enduring legacy of captivity narratives in American literature and culture will be analyzed to understand their continuous significance in contemporary discussions of national identity and foreign relations. The question that arises itself is how do the early Protestant faith and Puritan captivity narratives continue to influence contemporary captivity narratives, extending beyond personal experiences to that of ideology?

It is essential to recognize that captivity narratives from the early Puritan period were not about captives who were held and captured by the American Indians, but the imagination of the nation. During a time when people experienced an unprecedented 'removal' from religion as a result of their intensely growing desire for land and worldly accommodations, clergymen believed that Puritan captivity narratives, such as Mary Rowlandson's, are "filled with passages on the physical hunger captives experienced, but this is finally subordinated to the spiritual hunger meant to teach."¹⁰ Rowlandson's narrative, though a story of personal

survival, succeeded in conveying the colonial discourse and Puritans' identity and ideals that need to be protected from the Indian enemy. Cotton Mather's sermon, a captivity narrative where he modulates his discourse about the dangers of conversion to Islam sharply contrasted with the Christian faith. Through letters, he urged the captives to refuse any kind of acculturation as it threatens national salvation, and make their profession of faith true to their practice, in other words to repent their backsliding during their time of physical freedom and to practice God's commandments in order to be born again as new converts to the Christian religion.

Those narratives were employed as an authentically reliable source for emphasizing the Indians 'naturally and innately' inhumane nature, and therefore to account for "God's interposition of divine mercy, which had overruled the respective evil natures of the French and Indians."¹¹ From Puritanism to the Vietnam tales of imprisonment, one can notice that the Americans refused to assimilate with the host country, all cultural norms within the land of enslavement and imprisonment were seen as inferior. Whereas the Americans refused the identity conversion, the American Indians were asked to give up their Indian ways and become thoroughly Anglicized before they could gain acceptance as church members. A broad racist streak came in the cultural baggage of the earliest European settlers, with missionaries in Puritan New England demanding that the Indian give up all.

Thus, it is the aim of this study to examine how the portrayal of indigenous people as inferior and exotic 'other' enabled the justification of the containment strategy, emphasizing the ways in which dehumanization was an instrument to justify the expansion and the

exploitation of these communities. What was already known about the ‘other’ was known through captivity narratives. In his commentary on nineteenth-century travel writing, Edward Said notes that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.¹²

The first part and the second part of this thesis will discuss the captivity narratives and American exceptionalism through various texts from the Puritan period until modern time. The captivity experience is bound to the social needs, requirements, and prerequisites of a specific era within a particular timeframe. The variety of interpretations used by the narratives, authors aimed to explain their conditions of their captivity, manifesting in various forms, including ideology. Accordingly, the first and the second part revolve around different interpretations of captivity narratives from different historical eras. The examination of these ideologies would account for the fact that captivity does not necessarily imply the physical alienation of the captives from their home culture; however, covers the diverse range of ideologies that captivity represents.

In order to understand the relationship between American captivity narratives and American identity, ideology and foreign policy, it will be drawn from New Historicism. The latter is a critical theory that was developed in the 1980s, primarily through the work of Stephen Greenblatt. It aims to understand how the American captivity narratives in their historical contexts, examining how they both shape and are shaped by the socio-political circumstances of their time. In applying New Historicism, we can explore how the captivity

narratives from the colonial period to the Vietnam then Iraq War reflect and respond to broader historical and political events. New historicism is a school of literary criticism that is concerned with the historical, social and cultural contexts of the author in the period of time his literary work is produced. It believes that literature should be considered as a product of the time, place and historical circumstances of the author. Thus, a literary work should be looked at as a reflection of the life and the time of its author. This school of criticism assumes that the main task of a critic is to understand the history of the writer in addition to analyzing the literary text, since history is an integral part of the text. Advocates of new historicism believe that themes and characterizations developed in any text are those which were common in that given society in a given period of time. Moreover, it is said that because literature is the creation of man as well as history, it is no more objective but subjective.

Part three, through a postcolonial lens, examines how the construction of the self and the other is linked to the establishment of cultural boundaries. It examines how the American captives in the Vietnam War portrayed the Vietnamese as the 'other' in order to convince the anti-war protesters to sympathize with them. In chapter one, the heroic self is established against the exotic other through dehumanizing the Vietnamese in order to justify the American intervention and civilizing. The narratives portrayed the American prisoners as heroes who sacrificed their life to help the Vietnamese in fighting communism. It is a tradition in captivity narratives for captives to dehumanize their captors in order to justify the American expansion and desire for more territories. In this chapter, food and clothing will be discussed as norms of cultural understanding that the captives considered inferior because they are

different from those at home. It examines how food and clothing are important elements in captivity narratives and how they serve as identity markers, indicating social status and individual identity. The clues of cultural understanding accelerated the captives' alienation as they refused to adhere to the cultural norms of the home culture.

Chapter two explains how the portrayal of Vietnamese women as victims, showing how the narrative liberation from perceived barbarism is used to justify and legitimize the American presence in Vietnam. The portrayal of Vietnamese women as sexual objects who betrayed the war nationalist cause serves to highlight a contrast with American women, who embody virtue through love and loyalty to their country while enjoying freedom at home. *Orientalism* (2003) by Edward Said, it will be used to highlight how the Western society have historically constructed and represented the East in both chapters. Said claims that the Orientalist believes that "there were-and are-culture and nations whose location is in the east and their lives and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West."¹³

Part four deals with the captivity of the mind that goes beyond the physical confines experienced during captivity in Vietnam, and postwar trauma upon returning home. It also explores the concept of narrative healing and how veterans used storytelling as a way for healing and coping with their trauma. The veterans' alienation in Vietnam and postwar trauma are going to be discussed in chapter one. Alienation will be studied as one phase of culture shock which is defined as a common experience for persons encountering another culture in different contexts. For Peter Adler, cultural shock is "a form of anxiety that results from the

loss of commonly perceived and understood signs and symbols of social intercourse.”¹⁴The Americans’ alienation in Vietnam takes its theoretical inspiration from Edward T. Hall’s *The Silent Language* (1959), where Hall’s key message is that one must learn to understand the unconscious aspects of communication. He argues that much of human communication happens without words, through time, space, gestures, posture, tone, and social behavior.¹⁵ This chapter highlights how the narratives written from an ethnocentric standpoint influence the cultural understanding and acceptance of the captives. By viewing the home culture as exotic and inferior, they are immediately placed in a position of alienation which is accelerated to ethnocentric perspectives. Thus, the captives feel alienated and marginalized as they were able to express their cultural identity.

During their time in Vietnam, soldiers experienced alienation, which continued upon their return to the United States, where many veterans found themselves unable to reintegrate into society. The psychological and emotional challenges faced during the war transformed into a more enduring trauma. The internal conflict and a lack of societal understanding and support from society, often resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This revealed the profound and lasting impact of the war, leaving veterans feeling isolated for long after their physical captivity ended; it is, rather, a captivity of mind. Through Jeffery Alexander’s *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the harrowing experiences in Vietnam have deeply affected their mental well-being and societal integration. Viewing this from a cultural trauma lens helps us understand the legacy of trauma as a personal, collective, and societal level, as it keeps

influencing national identity and memory. In effort to combat the alienation and postwar trauma they experienced; the captives began to embark on a healing journey that will be discussed in chapter two of this part.

Chapter two discusses the healing power of words and the captives' recourse to writing to express their emotions and escape the atrocities of captivity. Through stories of their plights, the captives can process their trauma and empower towards internal liberation. The captives experience a profound sense of disconnection in foreign lands; however, writing created a space for themselves where they could reflect on their emotions and assert their agency. The soldiers' traumatic experiences in Vietnam can be analyzed through Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). The psychoanalytical conception of traumatic experience will be linked to their experiences within captivity. We will try to study the role of writing in not only recording their stories but also in resisting physical confines of captivity and find solace in the realm of creativity. In this way, the narratives served as a therapy that enabled the prisoners to cope with trauma and maintain their identities as Americans. Through writing, they confronted their feelings of otherness and disconnection, asserting their agency and identity. As a postcolonial concept, alienation is a complex phenomenon that reflects the impact of the legacy of colonialism on the American prisoners of war who worked towards healing and reclaiming their identities.

Part five is entitled the media, public opinion, protest, and Amerasians' quest for belonging. Chapter one deals with the media's crucial role in shaping the minds of its users. Media images in the Vietnam War were very influential in either reinforcing or changing the

foreign policy towards the war. Media coverage demonstrated the ability of media to change public perceptions and feelings about war in general and the country's involvement in war. The Vietnam War therefore marked a turning point in the nature of news coverage of war. This is yet another legacy of the Vietnam War which remains relevant today. The American perspective of the Vietnam War or American War as it is called in Vietnam can be well illustrated through people's urge to end the waste war which broadcast on TV screen in every single American house. In the context of the Vietnam War, the Agenda-setting theory helps us to understand how the media coverage of the war influenced public perception and opinion. Proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972, the agenda-setting theory, helps us understand the power dynamics between the media, public opinion, and government narratives, highlighting how media coverage can shape public discourse and influence the course of events in the Vietnam War.

In the second chapter hybridity is going to be explored through the Amerasians' quest for belonging. Being of mixed Vietnamese and American heritage, they found themselves on the threshold, not fully recognized as either Americans or Vietnamese. They were seen as 'third space' in terms of their identity as theorized by Homi Bhabha, referring to hybrid spaces that emerge from the interactions of different cultures and identities. Homi Bhabha's *The location of Culture* (1994), and the concept of 'third space' is useful to understand the complex and dynamic nature of their identities, representing a space of negotiation and resistances they navigate between the cultural influences of their Vietnamese and American backgrounds. The Amerasians represent a complicated narrative that evokes feelings of

shame and trauma for both sides. It reminds the Vietnamese of the perceived betrayal of the war, carrying the burden of historical scars and shattered ideals. For Americans, it reminds them of a traumatic war that transformed the veterans from national heroes to PTSD survivors.

One of the reasons behind studying the Vietnam War is the unique and multifaceted representation from both sides, the Vietnamese and American perspectives. The Vietnam War was a conflict involving multiple factions and actors, including not only the nationalist Viet Cong forces and American intervention, but also internal divisions within Vietnamese society. Undoubtedly, the Vietnamese waged a fierce struggle compelled by ideological beliefs and patriotism, nevertheless, their war literature cannot be overlooked as it is strikingly different particularly when it is compared to other postcolonial narratives.

This complexity may have made it more difficult for Vietnamese writers to align themselves with a single patriotic narrative. Reading the Vietnamese novels, one can notice that Vietnamese writers, especially in the South, focused on personal stories, especially love stories. For many Vietnamese in the South, the end of the war did not mean peace; it meant depression and escape. The communist regime tightly controlled artistic expression and literature, limiting the ability of writers to openly critique or challenge official narratives of the war. Vietnamese writers in the diaspora, especially in the United States, often faced challenges in finding a voice and audience for their works, as they navigated both American expectations and Vietnamese cultural norms. During the Vietnam War, the conflict was part of the broader Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union, with Vietnam becoming a focal point for competing ideologies and global interests. The reunification of the

country and the establishment of a socialist government had a profound impact on the direction of Vietnamese literature, with themes of rebuilding, reconciliation, and nation-building becoming prominent in post-war writings. The Vietnamese seem to prioritize their personal traumatic experiences, particularly their love stories ruined by the war. It cannot be denied that Vietnamese writers were patriotic; however, there is no mention of decolonization or urging people to resist the enemy. Instead, they chose to explore their innermost thoughts and emotions. Through a conflict setting, the novelists frequently employ stream of consciousness and flashbacks as reminiscence of their peaceful lives in their villages with their loved ones.

In 1991, Bao Ninh wrote his novel, *The Sorrow of War*, where a writer called Kien struggles to process his traumatic experience in the Vietnam War. The author illustrates how disillusionment with society and way of life can shape a person's inner state and their memories of war. Bao Ninh in his novel managed to open the other side of the conflict and demonstrated that people were not only faceless gun fodder, but humans with their own thoughts, dreams, and memories. Many people focus only on the American victims of the war, forgetting the suffering and losses of the Vietnamese people. War leaves a lasting impact on the minds and souls of soldiers, making memories, attitudes, and lost dreams central themes in the novel. Patriotism can be subjective and complex, as individuals may have different interpretations of what it means to love and serve their country. The authors' commitment to the Vietcong movement, their bravery in battle, and their poignant reflections on the war's effects on Vietnam are subtly conveyed in their literary works. This may be

attributed to the timing of their writings, which occurred post-war and led to a focus on themes of trauma and longing, rather than overt displays of patriotism. Thus, further research is necessary to inquire into the distinctive nature of Vietnamese War literature.

Endnotes:

- ¹. Paul Baepler, *White Slaves African Masters: An Anthology of African Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.24.
- ².Ibid:02.
- ³. Lawrence A.Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen, Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816* (United States of America: acid-free paper, 2009), p.202.
- ⁴. John D. Foss, “A Journal, of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss “ in Paul Baepler ed., *White Slaves African Masters: An Anthology of African Barbary Captivity Narratives*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.95.
- ⁵. Craig Howes, *Voices of the Vietnam POWs: Witnesses to Their Fight* (New York, Oxford university Press, 1993), p.54.
- ⁶.Stanely Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking Press, 1983)
- ⁷. Fredrik Logevall, *Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America’s Vietnam* (New York. Random House, 2012).
- ⁸. Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
- ⁹. Christina Schwenkel, *The American War in Contemporary Vietnam: Transnational Remembrance and Representation*. Bloomington (Indiana Press, 2009).
- ¹⁰. Gary L. Ebersole, *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Postmodern Images of Indian Captivity* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), p. 66.
- ¹¹.Ibid:68.
- ¹². Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Book ltd, 2003), p.39.
- ¹³. Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam* (New York: Vintage House, INC: New York, 1981), p.52.
- ¹⁴. Peter Adler, “Culture Shock and the Cross-Cultural Learning Experience” (in *Reading in intercultural Education*, vol.2, 1972), p.08.
- ¹⁵.Edward T.Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Anchor Books Edition, 1973), p.192.

Part One: Captivity Narratives and American Exceptionalism

Captivity narratives have long been a significant part of American literature and history as well, reflecting the complex interplay between American identity, ideology, and foreign policy. The narratives are typically tales of imprisonment, providing a lens through which to explore themes of survival, adaptation, and cultural exchange. This part will examine how captivity have shaped and reflected American identity, and defined the nation's values and beliefs. The ways in which these narratives have been used to justify and support American foreign policy decisions will be explored. From the colonial period, we seek to understand how these narratives have influenced the American psyche and continue to shape perceptions of identity, race, and power dynamics. The enduring legacy of captivity narratives in American literature and culture will be analyzed to understand their continuous significance in contemporary discussions of national identity and foreign relations.

In order to understand the relationship between American captivity narratives and American identity, ideology and foreign policy, it will be drawn from New Historicism. The latter is a critical theory that emerged in the twentieth century and focuses on the interplay between literature and history. It aims to understand how the American captivity narratives in their historical contexts, examining how they both shape and are shaped by the socio-political circumstances of their time. In applying New Historicism, we can explore how the captivity narratives from the colonial period reflect and respond to broader historical and political events. New historicism is a school of literary criticism that is concerned with the historical, social and cultural contexts of the author in the period of time his literary work is produced. It believes that literature should be considered as a product of the time, place and

historical circumstances of the author. Thus, a literary work should be looked at as a reflection of the life and the time of its author. This school of criticism assumes that the main task of a critic is to understand the history of the writer in addition to analyzing the literary text, since history is an integral part of the text. Advocates of new historicism believe that themes and characterizations developed in any text are those which were common in that given society in a given period of time. Moreover, it is said that because literature is the creation of man as well as history, it is no more objective but subjective.

Before exploring how the captivity narratives has been influenced and reinterpreted within the American history, it is important to first grasp the American exceptionalism. It is crucial to understand the unique ideals and beliefs that shaped American society in order to properly interpret the narratives discussed in the upcoming chapters. Influenced by the ideas of Enlightenment, the Americans built their nation, shaking off what they inherited from the British to give birth to their “Imagined Community”.¹This community was built thanks to the initiative of people who believed in the concept of freedom based upon an autonomous human subject who is capable of acting in a conscious manner. Peskin Lawrence argues that “the new nation was a product of the very Enlightenment-era liberalism that Jurgen Habermas found so necessary for the development of what he termed the “bourgeois ,” or liberal ,public sphere.”²

Alexander Hamilton declared that “In its simplest sense the Enlightenment was the creation of a new framework of ideas about man, society and nature, which challenged existing conception rooted in a traditional world-view, dominated by

Christianity.”³Empirical observation, reason and science are major themes of the Enlightenment project. It was the Age of Reason during the second half of the eighteenth century. Americans praise freedom which is derived from individualism which regards human agents as autonomous and transcendental through the exercise of reason, “for the men of the Enlightenment saw themselves as liberators, potentially of the whole world. They sensed that the Enlightenment represented a clean break with a corrupt, benighted, and barbarous past, and the inauguration of a period of radical change, freedom and progress.”⁴

With the beginning of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the individuals could make sense of their existence and could build their modern world, with a new social order, which was characterized by a new dynamism, a rejection of earlier traditions, a belief in progress and the potential of human reason to promote freedom. Experiencing the world, the individual could claim to have a transcendental source of certainty within himself. He could set out to realize himself by realizing the world within himself.⁵The Enlightenment witnessed an increasing rationality that would enhance social understanding, order and control, justice, moral progress and human happiness. Martin D. Henry defines Enlightenment as:

not an organized movement, but more a persuasive mood of freethinking, critical questioning, a mood that spread throughout the Western world from the seventeenth century onwards. It was the intellectually revolutionary period in modern times, that began in England in the middle of the seventeenth century, reached America and France in the eighteenth, and spread finally to Germany and the rest of Europe by the end of the eighteenth century.⁶

The Enlightenment saw itself, rather, for the most part as combating religion that claimed to have a privileged access to truth. It tended to acknowledge a rational doctrine of God, and saw the world itself as the sphere of human endeavour and regarded humanity's fate as an experiment to be conducted by human beings alone. During Enlightenment, science and reason were the major factors that led to the emergence of Western rationality and the Enlightenment project. These ideals pushed the Americans to establish the ideal nation which rose from nothing.

The Enlightenment ideals; however, were threatened within captivity where the cultural norms were seen as inferior to those of the Americans. The power exercised by the captivity narratives on the American foreign policy is evident in the fact that Americans linked the imprisonment of its citizens to the imprisonment of the nation. The influence of captivity and hostages in shaping American foreign policy is grounded in America's long history since their first encounter with the American Indians. The captivity of Jessica Lynch in Iraq and the intense public fascination in 2003 made it clear that though captivity narratives were written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the genre cannot be consigned to a dry past full of impossible religious beliefs and short on alternative narrative thrills.⁷

Melani McAlister, a professor of American studies at George Washington University, characterized the heavily mythologized version of the story that initially circulated as "the latest iteration of a classic American war fantasy: the captivity narrative."⁸ She brought up parallels between Lynch and the first, most famous captive in the American tradition, Mary

Rowlandson, held by Indians during King Philip's War in 1676. McAliste explains that for more than two centuries, the American culture has made the liberation of captives into a trope for American righteousness.⁹ These stories encouraged early Americans to see themselves not just as members of a community under God, as Rowlandson's narrative emphasizes, but as part of a nation finding its way in a complex international scene.

Beyond offering the earliest American portraits of the Islamic world, captivity narratives and other writings about Barbary from the early republic contrast America as a land of liberty with the tyrannies of Muslim rulers, a new set of oppressive masters to fill in for the British rulers the Revolution had dislodged.¹⁰ In their narratives, the captives described the pirates' bloody attacks with colorful, titillating language that provoked outrage in early America. Joseph Wheelan, as cited in Angella Sutton (2009), suggests that the Barbary War shares similarities with the modern war on terror, particularly in terms of tactics and strategy. However, the true significance of the Barbary conflict lies in its promotion of free trade, human rights, and the fight against tyranny and terror. The negative stereotypes associated with the Barbary Powers continue to influence perceptions of modern terrorists. These early interactions with pirate states in North Africa set a precedent for how the United States would handle hostile nations in the years to come.¹¹

What American knew about the Muslim world up to 1970's was through the Barbary pirates, according to Marwan Obeidat. The rhetoric found in the stories of the Barbary prisoners, in the newspapers of colonial America, and in the speeches of the founding fathers illustrate how the tales of the Barbary pirates influenced American perceptions of the Orient,

ultimately paving the way for a more aggressive foreign policy in the Mediterranean.¹² By portraying the foreign and unfamiliar as savage and menacing, the authors of the Barbary pirate captivity stories persuaded the American people that their nation needed to assert itself and overcome a cruel enemy, foreshadowing the beginnings of imperialism that had begun to emerge in the United States' dealings with its indigenous populations.¹³

From the very first captivity narratives to the Vietnam and then Iraq war, the rhetoric is the same, democracy versus despotism. In her article, "Slaves in Algiers, Captives in Iraq"(2004), Anne. G Myles established a link between early national and contemporary political rhetoric as she introduced President Bush's 2003 State of the Union speech to her students: "America is a strong nation and honorable in the use of our strength. We exercise power without conquest, and we sacrifice for the liberty of strangers. Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation."¹⁴She argues that for both Susana Rowson's characters and the current administration the dream is the same: that the world will become an empire of liberty under the leadership of the United States, a country that considers itself entitled to tell everyone else what freedom means and impose itself as "the standard of the world." Therefore, Bush's speech was delivered less than two months before the tanks rolled into Iraq; Rowson 's dialogue, less than a decade before the United States' invasion of Tripoli, the first war authorized under the U.S. Constitution and the country's first military victory following the Revolution.¹⁵

The perception of captivity as an event of mythological importance draws attention to the founding ideals that America was built upon since the Revolution, or less systematically since the British set foot in the New World: national memories of settlement, expansion and conquest. In effect, these stories were manipulated in a deceptive way to capture the imagination of the American public, and the media played a great role in the making of this deception. Captivity narratives, in this context, functioned as effective baits to attract the reading public, whose curiosity to know how captives dealt with duress drives them to those narratives seeking psychological satisfaction more than anything else. As soon as the bait is taken, the media mounts the stage by manipulating the narratives to create a speech of hatred and disgust against the evil or savage 'other'.

Paul Baepler argues that American captivity narratives written by the American captives who survived Barbary captivity in North Africa had a strong influence on American policy and culture. In effect, the eighteenth century witnessed the publication of a large number of narratives which depicted the miserable conditions and the sufferings being inflicted on hundreds of men and women in North Africa. These accounts invoked public subscription for fund raise campaigns and forced the American government to pay humiliating ransom money and military arms to African captors. Baepler was basically able to identify some areas in which captivity narratives influenced America: for instance, a few of these accounts revealed some of the impressions Americans had for Africans during the time America was divided against itself over the issue of slavery. Some writers and biographers, believe that Abraham Lincoln adopted his stance on slavery after he read

Captain James Riley's authentic narrative. A few years later, Riley's account and certainly many others, stimulated the drive to create the U.S. navy and brought about the first post-revolutionary war.¹⁶ This is to mention just a few examples of how captivity narratives are powerful enough to create profound and crucial changes in any society. However, a thorough understanding of how mere narratives written by laymen about a difficult personal experience in a foreign land, can gain that power and cause all that change, should invite an objective look at the life of American Captives as depicted in fiction and non-fiction works:

[T]he meaning of captivity is rhetorically and socially negotiated, not predetermined," thus states Rev. John Williams as cited by Gary L. Ebersole in his enlightening book *Captured by Texts: Puritan to Post-modern Images of Indian Captivity*. Thus, the captivity narratives are not written innocently to relate the physical hardships of their authors. They were just written to meet the social needs, requirements, and prerequisites of a particular generation at a specific point in time. The variety of interpretive frameworks, adopted by people to explain away their condition, accounts for the adequacy of captivity to appear in several other shapes and disguises, among which ideology would be no exception.¹⁷

The term ideology in Britannica is defined as: "a form of social or political philosophy in which practical elements are as prominent as theoretical ones. It is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and change it."¹⁸ However, we must also be interested in the critical conception of ideology as "essentially linked to the process of sustaining asymmetrical relations of power, that is, the process of maintaining domination."¹⁹ Only if we structure this conceptual framework of ideology as a critique, rather than as a purely descriptive term replete with neutrality toward its subject of analysis; we could possibly create links between ideology, language, and the real world:

[O]nce we recognize that ideology operates through language and that language is a medium of social action, we must also acknowledge that ideology is partially constitutive of what, in our societies 'is real.'²⁰

Yet, we read from various historians and literary critics that the circumstances which surrounded the production of these narratives, be it historical or political, had an undeniable influence on the policies of the country whose citizens were held captives by African states. The Barbary captivity narratives flourished in the post-independent America when the construction of the American identity and spirit was needed. From Indian captivity to Vietnam, Iraq and Somalia stories of hostages, the genre followed the same pattern: constructing a unique American identity opposed by a black image of the other. Thus, this part will shed light on the American foreign policy from Barbary captivity narrative from colonial period to post-independence.

Chapter One: Puritan Captivity Narrative

After settling in the New World, Americans started to face the affliction of captivity among Indians. They had not yet enjoyed freedom in their new country when they were caught and imprisoned by the Indians. The way the Puritans approached, valued and treated the Indians in America is intrinsically tied to their religious belief and the religious concepts they applied to order the world they lived in. From the colony just four years later for what were then considered as eccentric ideas. Roger Williams promoted the idea of separating church and state, ensuring that the ruling Puritans did not enforce their beliefs on different religious groups, and believed that the government should not take land from the Native Americans to give to settlers. Williams' exile ultimately resulted in the establishment of the colony of Providence. Anne Hutchinson provided another illustrative case of the challenge of the established Puritan orthodoxy in Massachusetts Bay. In the beginning, she adhered to the teachings of John Cotton, a minister renowned for his sermons upholding the covenant of grace, which states that God grants salvation to undeserving individuals freely and without conditions. From a fervent commentator on Cotton's sermon to the womenfolk and later also to men at her very home, Hutchinson began to form her own religious beliefs, such as the belief in direct communication with God without the need for clergy, and the assurance of salvation, which provided believers with a sense of peace in contrast to the constant pressure imposed by Puritan orthodoxy.

However, her unconventional beliefs posed a threat to religious conformity and social order in a predominantly male-dominated society. Consequently, Hutchinson was

brought before the General Court of Massachusetts and ultimately exiled to Rhode Island in November 1637. In this tumultuous period of various crises, especially in the realm of religion, the importance of Cotton Mather and Mary Rowlandson emerges as they were among the first to address issues of colonial captivity.

1. Mary Rowlandson's Indian Captivity Narrative and Spiritual Redemption

Rowlandson had managed to survive her time in captivity with the Native Americans, eventually making her way back to Boston. She shared her experiences through spoken accounts and later through a published book titled "Sovereignty and the Goodness of God... Being a Narrative of the Captivity and Restauration of Mrs. Rowlandson" in 1682. Throughout Rowlandson captivity narrative, she insisted on the prevailing idea of Indians savagery. Towards the end of the introduction, Rowlandson states: "I had often before this said that if the Indians should come, I should choose rather to be killed by them than [be] taken alive."²¹ Through addressing the idea of barbarity with "these ravenous beasts", it is clear that Rowlandson and other Puritans have a complete lack of knowledge about the Indians and their lifestyle, and even their reason for destroying the homes and lands of the colonists. She considers the Indians as merciless heathens who come from Satan.²² Rowlandson criticizes the way the Indians celebrate their rituals, where they dance and chant, and [make] the place a lively resemblance of hell.²³ Their unchristian lifestyle is completely foreign to her, and her first instinct is to relate their practices to satanic rituals. She maintains a passive attitude, however, in hopes that they will not hurt her or her

wounded and dying daughter. She eventually becomes too weak to walk any longer, and the Indians, like inhuman creatures, laugh and rejoice to see it.²⁴

Rowlandson declares that the Indians do nothing to provide her comfort during their long journey through the rough landscape of the New England wilderness. Her only refuge is to take comfort in her Bible and pray that God will deliver her through these troublesome times. Throughout her narrative, the function of religion plays a significant role. Paradoxically, it is only under captivity hardships that she deepened her religious sensibility and strengthen her faith. It was an opportunity to revise her identity as a Puritan and use the Puritan ideology in order to show the sovereignty of goodness of God for the benefit of the afflicted. According to Christian Weckenman in *Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative – Applied Puritan ideology?* (2007), her experiences as well as her dealings with the Indians are therefore neither recounted to present the reader with an authentic picture of Indian culture nor to convey historical knowledge about King Philip's War. Her narrative is meant to assist fellow Christians in comprehending God's ways and to provide a model for the right behavior in times of affliction.²⁵

The Native Americans are depicted as "heathens" which focuses on their non-Christianity more so than their hostile or racial identities. Rowlandson's narrative is saturated with a Puritan perspective, particularly her interpretation of God's powers and the way he interacts with people. Through the Puritan perspective, God's power can be understood as functions in three distinct ways: protective, punishing, and redemptive.²⁶ For example, when Rowlandson contemplates suicide she introduces God's power to protect

her when she says, “I have thought since of the wonderful goodness of God to me in preserving me in the use of my reason and senses in that distressed time, that I did not use wicked and violent means to end my own miserable life.”²⁷ She also considers the ordeal as a punishment when she declares: “I then remembered how many Sabbaths I had lost and misspent, and how evilly I had walked in God’s sight; which lay so close unto my spirit, that it was easy for me to see how righteous it was with God to cut off the thread of my life and cast me out of His presence forever.”²⁸ After punishment, the redemptive power of God is introduced, “Yet the Lord still showed mercy to me, and upheld me; and as he wounded me with one hand, so he healed me with the other.”²⁹

As an American bestseller narrative, it was widely hailed in private and public spheres since its first publication in North America. Despite Rowlandson’s reluctance that her narrative would enter the public sphere, thousands of Americans rushed in earnest through libraries upon learning of the narrative’s publication. However, we can hardly imagine the voracious curiosity of this reading public being reduced to the patience of saint, after seeing Rowlandson returning from her captivity. Right after her return, her narrative began circulating orally upon the request of people, who couldn’t wait for a narrative to come out in print. Her writing provides the earliest images of the ‘other’ and set the boundaries between the American and the inferior Indian who need be tamed, justifying colonialism and expansion. As a text it reflects the colonial context and shaped the American perspective on the indigenous people.

Rowlandson's narrative came out as a reaction to the disseminating hearsays about sexual violations experienced during her captivity at the hands of Indians. At some point in her narrative, Rowlandson uncovers the cruel nature of her captives who "feared neither God, nor man, nor the devil,"³⁰ whose savagery could scarcely amount to abuse her chastity in the presence of God. She also has the intention to record her spiritual experiences, as well as provide a guide for those who are eager to know her religious practices during captivity.

Rowlandson's devotional practices entail a comprehensive discussion over the nature of Puritanism and the intertextual interpretations she contemplated. In her narrative, Rowlandson confronts "the several removes [she] had up and down the Wilderness"³¹ by appealing to a scriptural notion underwriting puritan conception of 'spiritual pilgrimage.' In other words, Rowlandson's physical incessant movements throughout the wilderness invoked her ungraceful past, when she had experienced complete spiritual removal from God. This spiritual removal aligns with the puritan conception of the "aimless futility of the movement of the pilgrim's soul before he or she finds the true path to salvation and to heaven."³² The following quote demonstrates Rowlandson's apprehensions of the workings of God's communication with her through her adversities in captivity;

If trouble from smaller matters begin to arise in me, I have something at hand to check my self with, and say when I am troubled, it was but the other day, that if I had had the world, I would have given it for my Freedom, or to have been a Servant to a Christian. I have learned to look beyond present and smaller troubles, and to be quieted under them, as Moses said, Exod. 14.13. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.³³

By accentuating Puritan beliefs and stressing Rowlandson's faith in God, she affirms her faith in divine providence and in God's goodness, but also establishes a distinction between civilization and savagery. This is done through describing the natives against the background of her religion. Rowlandson story of redemption reminds us of Robinson Crusoe who experiences nearly the same re-conversion experience on the island. As soon as adversities began visiting him, Crusoe was urged to adopt the puritan 'rhetorical strategies' he had long abandoned. Threatened by the discontinuity of his life, the protagonist was desperately urged to make sense of the meaningless design inflicting his condition: for him the island signified meaninglessness in all its sense; why things happened this way, why was it exactly him, what is the aim behind all these miserable undertakings? All these questions and many others incessantly haunted the meaninglessness of Crusoe's life on the island. Hence, Crusoe's voyage can fairly be said to have involved a shift in purpose: from securing himself a better life to securing himself from death. Thus, finding meaning in adversities was his first choice to defend himself against the prospect of death. Assigning meaning in such circumstances would involve a specific strategy of signification that words begin to appear in an unfamiliar contextual fashion, full of puritan implications and allegories.

In her book, *The Storm Inside: Trade the Chaos of How You Feel for the Truth* (2004), the American evangelist and writer Sheila Walsh, comments on the national weather service issues storm watches and warnings: "Personal storms can move in with lightning speed and devastate the landscape of our hearts and we never saw them

coming.”³⁴ In the bible, there are many times that God provided protection for his people from natural storms. While people still seek shelter from physical storms today, they can look to scripture for encouraging words during the symbolic storms of our life. Times of grief and despair can be represented by storms as moments to endure until the sunny days of happiness and safety arrive. The Bible provides wisdom and guidance to get through the storms and follow the path of God through difficult times. Thus, storms indicate more than an undefeatable natural phenomenon sweeping and demolishing the physical properties of Man. Instead, they signify a puritan replica for the adversities that might befall Man during life and, that might well result either in salvation or annihilation. Captured within a Puritan hermeneutic frame, Crusoe attributes the horrors of the storm to his ‘original sin’ when he disobeyed his father’s entreaties;

My father, who was very ancient, had given me a competent Share of Learning, as far as House-Education, and a Country Free-School generally goes, and design’d me for the Law; but I would be satisfied with nothing but going to Sea, and my Inclination to this led me so strongly against the Will, nay the Commands of my Father, and against all the Entreaties and Perswasions of my Mother and other Friends, that there seem’d to be something fatal in that Propension of Nature tending directly to the Life of Misery which was to befall me.³⁵

The concept of ‘Original Sin’ is a universal Christian doctrine that was shared by all Christian denominations. However, Crusoe’s last statement, in the previous quote, alludes to a peculiarly Puritan concept, pushed forward by John Calvin that “all people were predestined to either suffer the torments of hell or live in eternal bliss in heaven”³⁶ Calvin’s ‘hard determinism’ traps human life within an endless cycle of pre-destinations and divine plans that no hand of man can alter. Behind the mask of events, Crusoe deeply

believed that the divine hand, which is in constant control of the mechanical operations of the universe, must certainly be responsible for the various undertakings on the Island. Accordingly, Crusoe adopted a metaphorical ‘emblematic vision’ of the Protestant divines, when his attempts to account for the communicative function entailed by the storm;

Robinson Crusoe is structured on the basis of a familiar Christian pattern of disobedience-punishment-repentance-deliverance, a pattern set up in the first few pages of the book...[incorporating] the biblical exemplars who sometimes break the narrative surface: Jonah, punished for his disobedience by a storm at sea but providentially brought to land.³⁷

Seemingly, it is only in punishment that Crusoe attempts to find out the reason for punishment. He surrenders to the will of Providence while he was seriously afflicted, so that to understand the warning message God wants to convey through the appalling events, as well as accept “one’s particular calling”³⁸ for religious and moral maintenance. However, we need to understand that had it not been for Crusoe’s solitude on the island, he would not have probably entertained the same hermeneutical frame in relation to establishing communication with Providence, through his workings in the life of the protagonist.

Robinson Crusoe like Mary Rowlandson best illustrates captivity beyond the boundaries of the dire physical circumstances to that of ideology. As an infant nation, America constructed its identity through the ideas of puritanism under the Founding Fathers. Through his novel, Defoe imperialist intentions marked the struggle between puritanism and secularization as it is argued by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957):

Defoe's importance in the history of the novel is directly connected with the way his narrative structure embodied the struggle between Puritanism and the tendency of secularization which was rooted in material progress.³⁹

Mary Rowlandson Indian Captivity can be read as a spiritual redemption, a personal story of religious salvation, reflecting the puritan and colonial context. Then, the civilization mission manifests through describing the Indians as heathens who need to be tamed simply because they were non-Christians. Though a personal story of affliction and salvation, Rowlandson's narrative is meant to establish solidarity with her fellow Christians who experienced the same ordeal, and assist them in comprehending God's ways and to provide a model for the right behavior in times of distress. A literary text is a reflection of the material and cultural context in which it was written as it is stated by New Historicism. Rowlandson narrative is a product of the context; justification of colonialism and the civilization mission. It also shaped the American identity and ideology and attitudes towards imperialism during the early years of the independence.

The urge to construct a unique identity for the American young nation necessitated the construction of the enemy in order to establish a sense of unity among citizens. Telling a personal story of salvation and using a religious rhetoric aimed to justify westward expansion with the belief that they were divinely chosen to bring light and progress to the native Americans. Her narrative framed captivity as a test of faith and struggle between Christian civilization and Native 'heathens' barbarity.

2. Cotton Mather's Glory of Goodness and the Quest for Puritan Identity

The sermon *The Glory of Goodness* (1703) by Cotton Mather, recounts the deliverance of English captives from Barbary slavery in North Africa. Instead of depicting captivity as a process of cultural assimilation, Mather views it through a Puritan lens. He portrays the captives' captivity as a spiritual test that ultimately deepens their Christian faith and upholds Puritan identity. By examining the sermon within the context of captivity narratives and comparing it to the earlier work of Mary Rowlandson, one can see how these narratives served to maintain religious identity and strengthen communal beliefs in Puritan culture. In colonial New England, these narratives were significant for Puritan communities on religious and cultural levels. They allowed ministers and writers to interpret suffering as part of God's providential plan while reinforcing the boundaries between Christian civilization and perceived religious or cultural "others."⁴⁰

The difficult circumstances faced by the captives, forced to work, inadequate nourishment, and constant threat, were often recounted in speeches and writings. Puritan authors, including Mather, viewed these stories as more than just accounts of the past; they saw them as valuable moral teachings. By highlighting the hardships endured by the captives and their eventual release, religious leaders could underscore the significance of prayer, divine protection, and steadfast commitment to Christianity in the face of extreme challenges.⁴¹ As a prominent New England Puritan minister and known for strong religious beliefs, he focused more on the divine providence and the Puritan struggle against the enemy. Unlike Rowlandson whose narrative is more a personal story of spiritual salvation,

Mather's narrative aims to establish a puritan discourse of eternal salvation. In *The Glory of Goodness*, Mather interprets the captives' survival as a demonstration of God's providence, emphasizing the harsh conditions they endured in slavery such as strenuous labor, starvation, and mistreatment. However, he asserts that it was God who ultimately saved their lives, positioning their ability to endure not as a display of human fortitude but as a manifestation of divine mercy and intervention. In Mather's view, their captivity serves as a religious trial that underscores the resilience of Puritan faith.

A key element of Mather's argument is the captives' resistance to religious conversion. Mather's narrative also serves to reinforce the idea of cultural superiority. By depicting the captives as steadfast in their Christian faith and resistant to conversion, he implicitly suggests that Puritan beliefs are inherently superior to those of other cultures. This portrayal of the Barbary captives as valiant defenders of Christianity not only inspires admiration for their resilience but also reinforces the boundaries between the Puritan community and perceived outsiders. The captivity narrative thus becomes a tool for asserting and celebrating the religious and cultural identity of the Puritans.⁴²

Another important theme in the sermon is the preservation of Christian community within captivity. Mather explains that the English captives organized themselves into a religious society, meeting regularly for prayer and worship and maintaining moral discipline among themselves. This detail illustrates that Puritan identity was maintained collectively as well as individually. Even while enslaved in a foreign land, the captives attempted to recreate the social and religious structures of their homeland.⁴³ Through this

communal worship and organization, they remained spiritually connected to the Puritan world they had left behind. Mather urged the captives to protect their identity and refuse any assimilation to the home culture since any acculturation or individual conversion is a threat to the national identity and salvation, especially when one takes into consideration the cultural norms that caused the culture shock and reinforced a sense of superiority over the 'other'.

Mather's interpretation of the captives' eventual release attribute to the divine providence and power of prayer. The sermon suggests that continuous prayers from the churches of New England led to their deliverance, illustrating that God responds to the faithful prayers and plays an active role in human affairs. This perspective reinforces the idea of a spiritually connected Puritan community, demonstrating unity even in the face of considerable geographical separation.⁴⁴ The themes highlighted in Mather's sermon strongly resemble those found in the captivity narrative of Mary Rowlandson, whose book *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (1682) is considered one of the earliest and most influential American captivity narratives. Rowlandson recounts her abduction by Native Americans during King Philip's War, detailing her subsequent experiences prior to being ransomed and reintegrated into her community.

Like Mather's sermon, Rowlandson's narrative also views the experience of captivity through a religious perspective. She frequently refers to biblical passages and attributes her survival to God's providence. Both authors underscore the concept that enduring suffering is a trial of faith and that persistence illustrates one's spiritual fortitude.

In each piece, the theme of captivity is portrayed as strengthening Christian beliefs rather than diminishing them. However, there are also important differences between the two works. Rowlandson's narrative is a personal account that focuses on her emotional and spiritual experiences during captivity. She describes her individual struggles with fear, hunger, and doubt, highlighting the ways in which her faith sustained her during these trials. In contrast, Mather's sermon is not a personal narrative but a religious analysis meant for public consumption. His emphasis is less on individual experiences and more on the communal significance of captivity for the Puritan society as a whole.

Another difference lies in the cultural context of captivity. Rowlandson was captured by Native Americans within the colonial environment of New England, while Mather's captives were enslaved in the Islamic societies of North Africa. Despite these differences, both texts construct a clear boundary between Christian identity and the cultures of the captors. In each case, remaining faithful to Christianity becomes the central moral achievement of the narrative. Despite these varied circumstances, both narratives establish a stark divide between Christian identity and the cultures of the captors. In each account, staying true to the Christian faith emerges as a paramount moral triumph.

Cotton Mather's sermon *The Glory of Goodness* demonstrates how captivity narratives were used in Puritan society to reinforce religious identity and communal beliefs. By portraying Barbary captivity as a spiritual test rather than a process of cultural assimilation, Mather emphasizes the importance of faith, prayer, and communal solidarity. His interpretation of the captives' endurance and deliverance reflects the Puritan belief that

God actively guides history and protects those who remain faithful.⁴⁵ When compared to the earlier narrative of Mary Rowlandson, Mather's sermon reveals the broader role of captivity stories in shaping Puritan identity. Captivity, in both texts, serves as a test of faith that ultimately strengthens the spiritual bond of the Puritan community.

Both Rowlandson and Mather used religious rhetoric that highlighted the American righteousness and endeavor to bring enlightenment and salvation to the 'other'. However, Rowlandson's educational background and religious status cannot be compared to Mather, a prominent Puritan minister who played a key role in shaping early American identity and ideology, particularly in captivity narratives. His writings and sermons had a lasting impact on American culture and religion, through conveying a strong sense of religious beliefs and reflecting a deep commitment to puritanism. While captivity affliction triggered Rowlandson's life to return to God and embark on a spiritual journey, it is evident that she was not innocent; she was not merely telling her story for entertainment. Her narrative is a text influenced by the historical context, societal norms and prerequisites of her time, reflecting her intricate motivations and complexities as of grappling with captivity and faith. However, Mather's insights into religious and social dynamics of colonial America, his deep religious understanding and rhetoric were more effective in shaping the narrative around captivity and the defense of American identity, resisting acculturation or conversion to the faith of their captors.

Chapter Two: Barbary Captivity Narratives (Post-independence)

After the loss of the British protection following the Declaration of Independence (1776), as well as the right of sailing peacefully in the Mediterranean Sea under the Algerian British treaties, Algerian corsairs then struck fear into the hearts of sailors of the new born nation. From the late sixteenth century, the galleys of the Moors had been preying on Christian shipping in the Mediterranean, enslaving Christian mariners and offering sanctuary to outlaws. As a result, accounts of Barbary began to pour forth from the presses in every conceivable genre, looking to impress the readers at home. Some of these were published as part of efforts to raise money towards freeing the captives.

The antagonistic language used to describe the Barbary pirates and regencies in the captivity narratives surfaces in early American newspapers such as the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. The portrayal of the Barbary pirates in American articles shifts from neutrality to a more emotional and empathetic tone as the conflicts escalate. The language begins to resemble that of slave narratives, highlighting the cruelty and brutality of the pirate attacks and the suffering of the American captives. This change in tone reflects a growing awareness and outrage among Americans towards the atrocities committed by the Barbary pirates and underscores the human cost of these conflicts.⁴⁶

Between 1750 and 1785, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* regularly carried news about the Barbary corsairs and the North African regencies they operated from. In its Christmas edition of 1758, for instance, the paper reported that the most recent letters from Barbary told of two English ships captured by corsairs near the coast of Sallee. These letters

demonstrated objectivity in conveying the news as the unique purpose. There is a distinct lack of value judgments placed on the corsairs' activities in the Mediterranean. The very choice in language, the use of "corsairs" instead of "pirates" implies an understanding of these men as working under an authority, and in the first example, the authority figure in question is perceived as someone that America can maintain friendship with, implying an inherent equality in status.⁴⁷

By the mid-1780s, the language in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* began to resemble that of captivity narratives, with a shift in terminology from "corsairs" to "pirates" to describe the sea-rovers off the coast of North Africa. This change in terminology reflected a change in American perception of these individuals, likening them to Native Americans and portraying them as barbarous, similar to the "savages of the frontier."⁴⁸ An entry in the March 22, 1786 issue of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* exemplifies this shift in language.⁴⁸ Another entry from 1794 makes a similar comparison: "Our savage enemies in the Western Territory, and on the coasts of Barbary, are evils of the most painful nature..."⁴⁹ Again the Barbary pirates are considered as the enemies which obstruct the American progress as the Native Americans.

The Pennsylvania Gazette articles, influenced by captivity narratives, draw comparisons between the Barbary corsairs, Caribbean pirates, and Native Americans. They suggest that contrary to being seen as official naval forces of established regions, the corsairs from North Africa should instead be perceived as pirates or akin to Native Americans.⁵⁰ This shift in perspective, painting the pirates as barbaric, harkens back to dark

historical images reserved for the most despised adversaries. This change reflects a shift in American perception, viewing the corsairs not as entities open to diplomatic negotiation but as a threat to be eliminated through warfare in defense of American values.⁵¹

Thomas Jefferson's language linked the imprisonment of the captives to that of the nation through providing several reasons. Initially, the need for justice to be served against those who abducted Americans was emphasized. Additionally, it was crucial for the reputation and integrity of America as a sovereign nation to be upheld. As a result, the argument presented supported the notion that engaging in warfare would be more economical than giving in to demands for payment, and that while negotiation might have short-term benefits, war offered greater possibilities in the long run.⁵² Furthermore, going to war would centralize and therefore strengthen the federal government by providing it with "the instruments of coercion over its delinquent members." By fighting Algiers, the United States would earn respect in Europe, which would lend an advantage in future economic dealings with the current European superpowers.⁵³

Thus, the bellicose words of the founders, as well as those in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, echo the Orientalist concepts of the captivity narratives. Through dehumanizing the Barbary Coast rulers, who were portrayed as cruel even toward their own citizens, the founders succeeded to paint a black image of the 'other'. These ideas act as a justification for seeking retribution and employing military force, which helped legitimize Jefferson's reasons for declaring war based on commerce and status to the American public, accustomed to viewing North Africans as uncivilized savages since early encounters. By

portraying North Africa as monstrous and challenging this perceived “barbarity”, Anglo-America and later the U.S. were able to present their nation as fair and honorable. This opposition is vividly depicted in the captivity narratives and the *Pennsylvania Gazette* through their linguistic choices.⁵⁴ One of the main tenets of new historicism is that a literary text is a reflection of the material and cultural context in which it was written. Thus, the language changed to accommodate its users and reflect the historical circumstances.

The concept of Orientalism is rooted in the notion that the perception of the 'other' is framed in opposition to the self. By depicting the Barbary powers as different from themselves, Americans were able to depict their nation as one founded on freedom and commerce. This viewpoint of American identity as superior to the Barbary States justified the country's involvement in proto-imperialistic conflicts with North Africa. While America did not proceed to colonize North Africa, it did adopt elements of the European imperialistic mentality, with the Barbary Wars serving as an early example of this ideology.⁵⁵ It is essential to recognize the influence of words. The phrase “merciless barbarians” creates a different emotional response than a neutral statement, shaping perceptions and influencing attitudes during the Barbary conflicts. This language, reflected in publications like the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, played a crucial role in garnering public support for America's foreign policy decisions.⁵⁶

John Foss captivity narrative is among the narratives that well represented the genre. His narrative, as it tells us, contains a “simple statement” of facts about his sufferings in Algiers. Foss was captured alongside twenty other Americans by Barbary pirates in 1793. He set sailed from Baltimore on board the Polly en route to Cadiz after this American merchant ship had changed its original destination to Tobago because the freight it was supposed to transport had already been shipped by another vessel. This was one of the tragic ironies that Foss underlines in his text, for as he recounts on the approach to Cadiz, about 2 days to reach final destination, the Polly was boarded by Algerian privateers on October 25th, 1793.

The Algerian vessel “Babasera” was owned by Rais Hudga Mahomet Salaria, who informed the captives of the reality of their capture. Speaking through Rais Hudga Mahomet Salaria, Foss informs the reader that this capture could not have happened if Charles Logie, then British Consul at Algiers had negotiated a secret truce between Algiers and Portugal, allowing the sailing of Algerian corsairs to the Atlantic. Until the signature of this treaty, the Portugal warships had blocked the access to the Atlantic. With this very brief accusation, Foss moves to the description of the “Middle Passage” from the Atlantic to Algiers. He recounts how the American prisoners were moved to the Algerian vessel after having been stripped of their clothes.

On this vessel, they were ordered to do their duties as mariners under a blistering sun watching their own vessel sailing away from sight on its way to Algiers as booty. The

sole dish served to them consisted of “a dish of oil, Olives and Vinegar”, a dish barely sufficient to sustain a life of hardship on board a slave ship, according to Foss.⁵⁷

The separation from the natal culture starts on the slave ship with the plunder to which they fell victim, the assignment of watches at unusual periods of time than the ones observed in American naval culture, and continued when they arrived at Algiers on Friday 1st, 1793. Foss remembers how they were conducted to the Dey’s palace under the shocking shouts and “huzzas” of the inhabitants of Algiers having come out to celebrate the homecoming of their corsairs who have returned home with such a fortunate capture.

It is the religious dimension that strikes most the narration of this episode. Both the people of Algiers and the Dey called the natives “Christian dogs”, a phrase that Foss purposefully repeats in order to show the religious or Jihadist perspective from which the Regency of Algiers was waging an unjust war against a nation whose constitutional foundation is secularism. The Dey chose four boys from the captives presented to him for service in his palace while the rest were led to the Bellic bagnio. The Dey’s choice of boys is not without suggesting the perverse sexual drives of the Dey, according to Foss.⁵⁸

The rest of his narrative consists of two distinct but closely related parts, one part being devoted to general ethnographic observations and the second to his own subjective experience of imprisonment also meant to be generalized to all the American captives in Algiers. The ethnographic observations are all made from a comparative perspective whether this perspective is explicitly stated or not. They relate to clothing, the food ways, customs and traditions, religions, and gender roles. Even geography is brought into play by

situating Algiers and the State of Algiers on the same plane as Virginia and North Carolina, with the latter coming out favourably in terms of territorial management and industrial development. As for Foss's subjective experience, it is marked by complaint about the brutality of the masters, the backbreaking work to which he was submitted, and the terror of the plague, and as can be expected by the affirmation of links of solidarity among the captives and his own identity as American.

The last sections of his narrative are mostly concerned with the negotiation of the truce between Algiers and America under the leadership of David Humphreys, Joseph Donaldson, and Joel Barlow. The Algerian-American negotiations informally started in July 1795 and officially ended on Saturday 5 July, 1796 when "thunders of 21 Cannon" came out from the Castles of Fenelle and Cordalares in salute to the banner of the United States. Highly pitched feelings of patriotism and feelings of betrayal by the same patria soared up and down with the vagaries of the negotiations.

The miseries recounted by Foss did not come with the liberation of the American hostages from Algiers on July 10, after Barlow had arranged for the payment of the ransom with the help Machio Baccari a Jewish financier then accredited to the Dey's palace. Blocked in a quarantine because of the plague at least twice, stopped and checked several times by "Britannic Majesty's ships" in the Mediterranean, and left without the wherewithal after having refused to enter in his Majesty's service, Foss was able to reach home in Boston, Massachusetts only on June 17, 1797.

The last remark that Foss makes in his narrative to underline the harrowing experience he had gone through during his captivity in Algiers is that “out of the 9 persons who left Baltimore on board the Brig Polly, 4 only returned.”⁵⁹ Another fellow American captive from Boston, Massachusetts to be imprisoned in Algiers eight years earlier than Foss is James Leander Cathcart. Like Foss, Cathcart set sail from Boston en route to Cadiz on board an American schooner called the *Maria*. The latter was attacked by an Algerian xebec, three miles off Cape-Saint Vincent, off the coast of Portugal. Its crew of six were dumped below deck after being stripped of their clothes. Unlike Foss’s captivity narrative, Cathcart’s record of harrowing experience of captivity covered the eleven years of American captivity in Algiers.

Apart from the details that Foss delivers in his account, he, for example, makes us privy to the first underhand negotiations that the American government through Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and William Carlyle attempted to start with the Regency of Algiers for the redemption of the captives. The attempts undertaken either through agents like John Lamb or the Marthurians, a French religious order, were doomed to failure because of lack of financial resources to meet the amount of money demanded as ransom, or because of the French Revolution that put an end to the existence of religious orders, or because of the untimely death of negotiating agents like the naval hero John Paul Jones. Cathcart’s “The Captives, Eleven Years a Prisoner in Algiers” (1899) is strikingly different from that of Foss in at least one aspect.

Apart from being quite substantial and compiled in an essay form by his granddaughter to be published nearly a century later after the event, Cathcart's account reads as much a captivity narrative as a success story of the Alger sort. The fact that it was published at the turn of the nineteenth century when the genre of success story was in vogue because of the fortunes that were then being made by common people growing from rags to riches makes Cathcart's narrative fall naturally into that category of narrative. The settings differ but not the cut-throat competition for survival in dire circumstances.

Cathcart describes how he made a fortune in Algiers, going up the social ladder from the pit of slavery to become successively gardener in the Dey's palace, a "coffeegie" or coffee brewer, clerk of the marine, clerk of the bagnio Galera where he earned a tavern, "chief clerk of the Dey and Regency of Algiers" before he was finally nominated as U.S. consul general to the Barbary States following his redemption. In addition to the enslaving conditions in which he accomplished his social mobility, Cathcart in the manner of the economic heroes of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Age tells us how he became a philanthropist to fellow American captives who had not managed to climb to the same enviable position.

Writing in the early period of independence, in what American historians call the Critical Period, Foss and Cathcart produced captivities meant to function as a mirror of the other in the early American republic. Stephen Greenblatt argues that the historical events affect the literary works of a society, the written works in that society also shape its history and collective mind by interpretation so that literary texts can also lead the history and

upcoming works.⁶⁰ The contrastive images offered through the narratives provided an opportunity to define the American identity by setting a different culture opposed the American ideals of liberty first set by the Founding Fathers. The dichotomy of 'Us' versus 'Them' is well demonstrated in the contrasted cultural norms of the home and host culture, underscoring the superiority of the latter over the former. Though still an infant postcolonial nation, America considered the captivity of its citizens as the captivity of the whole nation. Both Foss and Cathcart consider themselves as victims of Americans independence because of it was not strong, militarily and diplomatically, to protect them.

The culture shock endured by the two authors shows the vulnerability of the American nation, and it shows their disappointment to be brought back to slavery after being colonized by Britain. Through their dairies which were intended to flee the alienation they lived in captivity, a black image of Algiers was painted. The early accounts of the Barbary shores offered an image of the early republic and the major political and cultural conflicts that confronted it. Setting parallels between America and Algiers is done by both authors through staging Algiers as the second enemy after England.

The urge to construct identity in a quite opposite place reminds us of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) where Prospero could not establish himself as a master without imposing slavery on Caliban who said to be a "savage" which needs to be tamed. In order to understand the ideologies and foreign policies toward the other, one always needs to go back to early contacts of master and slave. The imperial visions of the British Empire at that time acquired the justification of land lapse and colonization through convincing the other

that he/she needs to be civilized as it is the case with Caliban. The white supremacy and the civilization mission were indoctrinated to manipulable mind and expand their geographic expansions. The colonial discourse in the *Tempest* (1611) is neither innocent nor descriptive, it is rather prophetic because it is related to the complexities and moral issue we are living today. Through the play, Prospero is seen as colonialist with racist overtones in his treatment of Caliban and Ariel who are both his subjugates. Caliban, the original inhabitant of the island before Prospero's arrival, was living in peace with nature like the American Indians, both of them are the victims of imperialism and the quest for supremacy.

Respectively, the 'other' is described by some Western writers as barbaric, uncivilized and sometimes even sub-human. It can be interpreted as either to justify their colonial attempts, showcase the cultural and racial differences or to defend the colonized people against colonial rule. It remains debatable for literary interpretation and inconsistent by nature. In this matter, and returning to Shakespeare's works, Ania Loomba argues that 'Cannibal' was etymologically connected to the Latin word *canis* (dog), reinforcing the view that 'the native cannibals of the West Indies hunted like dogs and treated their victims in the ferocious manner of all predators.'⁶¹

Loomba illustrates the double role of literature and its ability with which it can represent multiple meanings to each individual. It can endorse authoritarian discourse the same way it can fight it, and it leaves one perplexed about the real intentions of the author. This ambiguity serves to create an ideological dependency in the mind and psyche of the 'other', turning him/her into a potential servant who promotes the interests of the

imperial power. In this regard, Thomas Babington Macaulay, the architect of English education in India from his *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) argues:

English education, he suggested, would train natives who were “*Indian in blood and colour*’ to become ‘*English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect*.’” These people would constitute a class who would in fact protect British interests and help them rule a vast and potentially unruly land.⁶²

The American captivity narratives offered an opportunity to construct the identity of the young nation, emphasizing the superiority of America reflected by the inferiority of Barbary states. Though pretending the complete break with Britain, the tradition of Western superiority still perpetuates in the American minds to be the cornerstones of the new American government. Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, grew out of Europeans’ belief in “two complementary and inseparable truths. That they have the divine right, and that the natives are sub-human.”⁶³ In order to justify colonialism, the Westerner painted such a black image of the other who needs to be civilized. The civilizing mission within Vietnam, Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan reminds us of the American Indians who were exterminated because, according to the Americans, they were “far from accepting and joining in Indian customs, the English demanded their total extirpation.”⁶⁴

America considers itself as world savior which has the right to interfere in other countries affairs under what is called the ‘War of Terror’. Foss exclaimed that though they are slaves, they are gentlemen, “the American people must be the best in the world to be so human and generous to their countrymen in slavery.”⁶⁵ Foss’s perceptions of Americans, after his experiences with the inhabitants of Algiers, harken back the stereotypes that preachers in the

United States were establishing for generations. The captives view themselves as the defenders of a democratic ideal. An American in Tripoli observes: “how delightful it was to see the stars and stripes holding forth the hand of retributive justice to the barbarians, and rescuing the unfortunate, even of distant but friendly European nation, from slavery.”⁶⁶ In Barbary, the white captives found themselves in contexts that necessitated a revision of the discourses of knowledge and the identity of white society.

Like Foss, Cathcart connects his imprisonment to that of the American nation: “I was convinced that the honor of our country was connected with our redemption.”⁶⁷ The USA at that time lacked direct diplomatic means to negotiate the captives’ release. The United States was very sensitive to the captivity of their citizens because it had just won its independence from Britain. The fact that it could not protect its citizens was felt as a shame. In this sense, Cathcart writes:

Why are we left the victims of arbitrary power and barbarous despotism , in a strange land far distant from all our connections ,miserable exiles from the country of which we have fought , forgotten by our co(n)temporaries who formerly used to animate us in all our expedition with tales of liberty.⁶⁸

Despite obtaining a higher status in comparison to Foss, Cathcart was faithful to the imperialist language prevalent at that time. The same humiliation was strongly felt by both of them as a result of being enslaved by a culture that is supposed to be inferior to their natal culture. Though he played a significant part in the negotiation of the final peace treaty whose articles he delivered to Congress on a ship that he had purchased with the earnings

he acquired in Algiers, Cathcart was unable to dismiss the feeling that his experience should be remembered forever.

Foss is just a mariner with no education to equal that of Cathcart. His lower-class status arguably made him more susceptible to normative social and cultural distinctions that he had learned to observe in his own culture. If Cathcart's narrative can be read respectively as a success story and a philosophical tale, Foss's narrative deserves to be called a gothic narrative. Foss fails to make any effort to understand the home culture which is constantly opposed the American culture, perpetuating the cycle of stereotypes and value judgments. Cathcart and Foss are just a sample of many authors whose texts are just fruits of the context, reflecting the imperialist language prevalent at home.

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⁵²Richmond Brown entitled *Coastal Encounters: Confrontations, Accomodations, and Transformations inthe Eighteenth-Century Gulf South* (University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

⁵³ *Naval Documents Related to the United States War with the Barbary Powers*, Volume I. (Washington,D.C., 1939), 10.

⁵⁴Paul Baepler ,*White Slaves African Masters: An Anthology of African Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.76.

⁵⁵ Thomas Nicholson. *An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Suffering of Thomas Nicholson [ANative of New Jersey] Who Has Been Six Year A Prisoner Among the Algerines, And From Whome HeFortunately Made His Escape A Few Months Previous To Commodore Dacatur’s Late Expedition. ToWhite Is Added A Concise Description of Algiers Of the Customs, Manners &c of The Natives-andSomeParticulars of Commodore Decatur’s Late Expedition, Against the Barbary Powers.* (Boston: G.Walker, 1816), 9.

⁵⁶John D. Foss, “A Journal, of the Captivity and Sufferings of John Foss” in Paul Baepler ed., *White Slaves African Masters: An Anthology of African Barbary Captivity Narratives*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.76.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid:69

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰ Greenblatt, Stephen.*The New Historicism* .Edited by H.Aram Veesser, (Routldge,1989),p.34.

⁶¹ Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, (New York: Routledge, 2005),p.66.

⁶²Ibid:75.

⁶² .Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Minute on Indian Education* (1972),page 249.place and h of publication

⁶³ Alleg, Henri. *The Question*. Trans. John Calder. Jean-Paul Sartre. Preface, (London: John Calder, 1958)

⁶⁴ Slotkin, Richard. *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1800*, (Middletown,Connecticut:WesleyanUniversityPress, 1973),p. 127.

⁶⁵ Foss, John (1798).*Journal of Captivity and Sufferings in* Baepler, Paul *White Slaves, African Masters*. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press, 1999, p.95.

⁶⁶ Peskin, A.Lawrence. *Captives and Countrymen, Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785-1816*,(United States of America: acid-free paper, 2009), p.202.

⁶⁷ Cathcart, J. Leander (1899).*The Captives, Eleven Years a Prisoner in Algiers* in Paul Baepler ed., *White Slaves African Masters: An Anthology of African Barbary Captivity Narratives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.144.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Part Two: Captivity Narratives and Modern American Interventions

From colonial life to modern interventions, America justified its expansion by the civilizing mission and the divine right of enlightening the ‘other’. Thus, the texts were influenced by prevalent ideologies and answer the demands of interventionism, shaping the attitudes towards indigenous people and territories. Narratives from the Vietnam War, Somali hostage crisis, and Iraq War will be analyzed in order to highlight their strong influence and support for colonial policies that reinforced the idea that America is an idealistic template for the rest of the world to emulate. Therefore, the question that this part will be basically exploring should be: how the mere texts of imprisonment in foreign land had shaped the American identity, ideology and the foreign policy, on the one hand. On the other hand, how the imperialistic endeavor and the ideologies prevalent at home shaped these texts?

New Historicism will analyze the relationship between the contexts and the narratives where the authors convinced the American public to assert itself against any enemy that threatens the American identity. The exaggerated accounts as well as the orientalist language justified the American aggressive attitudes against the Orient in general. Thus, these texts were not written merely to recount stories of personal captivity, they were rather manipulated in a deceptive way to capture the imagination of American public, and justify the American expansion and interventions. The historical context is also important in shaping these texts that reflect the American identity, ideology and foreign policy, as text itself is also the result of certain non-discursive forces. As an infant nation, America needed to construct its identity in opposition to the exotic and inferior other.

Stephen Greenblatt, the founder of new historicism, sees that this critical practice should concentrate on the negotiation and exchange by which the representation of history becomes possible. Advocates of new historicism focus on the material effects and circumstances produced by the text and in which the text is produced. Thus, it is the suitable theory to understand the circumstances produced by the American captivity narratives and the historical context in which they are produced. New historicism makes two assumptions. First, the notion that man is a construct. Second, the historical investigator is likewise a product of his history and is never able to recognize otherness in its pure form, but always in part through the framework of the present.

Chapter One: Prisoners of the Vietnam War Narratives

For many Americans, the Vietnam War is a nightmare that haunted their peaceful lives for many years. The Vietnam War or the American War as it was called in Vietnam changed the American audience view toward the U.S. government foreign policy. The American public did not sympathize with the government decisions. That time the U.S. government failed to convince its citizens that they were establishing order and civilizing the Vietnamese, as America established itself as the ideal of democracy and liberty ,and as a model for the other countries to follow. Thus, American foreign policy toward all the other nations is the one of the savior either from the shackles of “barbarism” and “savageness” or Communism as it is the case with the Vietnamese.

Unlike captives of Barbary, the POWs were not considered heroes and they were not welcomed as the prodigal Son. The returned soldiers felt ashamed to come back to America because of the failure of the war itself. For many Americans, the war in Vietnam is a bad memory; it was the most unpopular war in their history. At home, the U.S. was split in two, as protests against the war turned angry and sometimes violent. It led to the downfall of one president and helped bring down another. Millions of Vietnamese and 58,000 Americans lost their lives in a distant war few people understood. For the thousands of families who had to flee their homes in Vietnam and leave to the U.S., the war brings memories of horror and loss. But for many Americans, Vietnam is a bad memory because it is the war they lost. In other words, the U.S. did not always achieve all their goals and plans. In Vietnam, they could not overthrow Communism and prevent Vietnam from

becoming a Communist country. Today, Americans still remember the vivid images they saw on TV, a war that split families in Vietnam and at home. They still remember the horrors of war and most importantly the young Americans were enlisted to war and left their homes unwillingly to come back home disoriented and rejected. It still has its effect on their lives and their government. Most of all, the war they lost changed the way they look at war itself.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world was broadly considered as unipolar, with the United States as the only superpower.¹ Throughout most of the second half of the twentieth century, the two world superpowers were the United States of America (formed in 1783) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (formed in 1917).² Faced with the threat of growing Japanese, German and Italian fascism and fearing a world war, the Western Allies, and the Soviet Union made an alliance of necessity during World War Two. As ‘the two nations had long been at odds’ the alliance between the USA and USSR was short-lived. All that gathered them was, simply, a common enemy and, in reality, the two countries had never confidence in one another. After the defeat of the Axis (Germany and its key allies (Italy and Japan)), these two world powers became highly suspicious of each other due to their extremely different ideologies.³

In defiance, Joseph Stalin established the so-called *Iron Curtain*, a metaphor which not only describes the physical border between the two blocs, the West led by the United States, and the East led by the Soviet Union, but also the ideological separation.⁴ In this respect, Winston Churchill, in a speech in Fulton, Missouri (1946), declared ‘from Stettin

in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the [European] Continent.’⁵These words officially marked the beginning of the Cold War. This struggle, known as the Cold War, lasted from about 1946 to 1991, beginning with the second Red Scare and ending with the August Coup when the Soviet Union collapsed. At the beginning of the Cold War the U.S., under the presidency of Harry Truman (1945-1953), adopted the Containment policy which ‘meant steady, firm resistance to communist expansion.’⁶ By the means of this policy, the United States tried to control Soviet influence abroad in order to halt any further expansion of Communism.

As a matter of fact, President Truman gave financial support to the free nations fighting Communism.⁷In 1947, with the consent of the Congress, he pledged \$400 million to fighting Communist revolutionaries in Greece and Turkey. Two years later, Truman succeeded to persuade the Western European powers to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in order to assemble and strengthen their forces to confront the soviet assaults. Feeling the imminent threat, in 1955 the USSR funded a similar treaty known as the Warsaw Pact.⁸President John F. Kennedy, at his inauguration in January 1961, declared that in order to seize and eliminate Communism his nation ‘would pay any price and bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foes.’⁹ In his turn, President Jimmy Carter, the 39th U.S. President, considered his country as ‘a beacon for nations who search for peace, freedom, individual liberty and basic human rights.’¹⁰

It is difficult to determine what particular event can be considered as the beginning of a military conflict known as the Vietnam War. Generally, it is agreed that it started with

the First Indochina War. The interference with the United States was rather gradually, first, by giving a financial assistance to the French troops, then, by sending military adviser to the south of Vietnam in 1955 and finally, by engaging in an open military conflict and starting bombardment of the North Vietnam in 1965. By the end of the First Indochina War, it was becoming clear that a communist North could gain control of all parts of Vietnam. Despite the deployment of more than five hundred thousand soldiers during the years, the conflict ended on April, 1975 with the United States losing the war and sending the remaining troops home. The unsuccessful ending of the Vietnam War left the United States disappointed and uncertain whether the cost and casualties were beneficial at the end. Nevertheless, it is agreed that the returning soldiers were not welcomed as heroes as in the previous captivity narratives. It is rather their traumatic disequilibrium which was emphasized to isolate them as war veterans from society.¹¹

In order to stop Communist rule, the U.S. supported the French against the Viet Minh. However, the war did not go well for France. After losing major battles, the French called for a peace treaty in 1954. Under the treaty, the French troops would move to the South, while the Viet Minh stayed in the North. The people of Vietnam would then vote for the leaders they wanted and the French would leave. Instead of supporting the treaty, the U.S. chose Ngo Dinh Diem as a leader to rule the southern part of the country. In 1954, Diem declared that the southern half of the country would be a new nation, called the Republic of Vietnam.

Viet Minh fighters who lived in the South joined other people who did not like the Diem government and formed a new group. It was called the National Liberation Front (or NLF), or Viet Cong as they called by Diem because they opposed him. As a result, he asked the U.S for help. At first, the U.S. sent only a few men, but by 1963 there were almost 17,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam. The U.S. also sent ships and planes to support Diem. In August 1964, two U.S. warships said gunboats from North Vietnam had fired on them. President Lyndon Johnson asked the Congress for more power to fight the war. Instead of declaring the war on Vietnam, the Congress passed an act that let Johnson use more force against North Vietnam. The act was called the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression. America was about to step up its role in the Vietnam War.¹²

The Vietnam War had a huge effect, both on the U.S. and on Vietnam. More than 58,000 U.S. soldiers died; many of those who came back suffered from wounds or mental illness. Most felt they got a poor welcome from a country that did not like the war they fought. Vietnam took decades to recover from the loss of life and damage of the war. Almost 30 years later, it is still trying to rebuild, as a result, many Vietnamese fled the country, often in small boats to live in the U.S. The huge cost of the war led to more inflation and budget shortfalls. For years after the end of the war, people talked about what America should have learned from it. They talked about the “Lessons of Vietnam,” but people did not agree on what those lessons were supposed to be; some thought the lesson

was that all war is wrong. After Vietnam, people in the U.S. did not feel the same about war.¹³

Unlike the captivity narratives where the majority of captives were illiterate, the Vietnam POWs were mostly career aviators. The average prisoner was only about thirty-two years old. The Vietnam War POWs were vastly superior to any group of prisoners in any previous conflict in which the United States had engaged. Heroes in Barbary Captivity were welcomed home unlike the POWs who were afraid to return home. In this regard, Bob Shumaker, a Vietnam veteran, argues that they were afraid to return to the United States of America, where they would be in disgrace. The same ideals of liberty and pride existed in both the narratives, but the Vietnam War was seen as waste and the POWs need help from the US government.¹⁴

The American psychological Association warned that the POWs who “have been assigned to the role of heroes in a war that has no heroes, the central role in an elaborate drama staged to provide justification for the president’s policy ,to create the illusion of victory and to arouse a sense of patriotic fervor.”¹⁵ Robert Jay Lifton felt the same way, observing that this may be the first war in history in which POWs become the heroes “around which civilian populations can cleanse themselves of guilt and reassert immortalizing principles.”¹⁶ The POWs were apparently committed to restoring an image “of simple, old-fashioned American military virtue, as though nothing had happened in Vietnam, and as though the understandable emotion around these men can wipe away 10 years of an ugly, an unjust war.”¹⁷

James Reston claims that the prisoners come back different men, usually helpless or rebellious since the majority of them were “killing the time” which means according to him that they were “killing their fears, blooting out the present, romanticizing the past and dreaming of a family and an America that are changed beyond their imagining” coming home “to the same but older wives, different children, a different country, with different memories and different values” will be “an agony.” He suggested that the POWs have to be rewarded because they suffered in Vietnam.¹⁸

The POWs cannot admit that they suffered for a wasted cause; John McGrath noted that while a few Americans listened to the stories and maltreatment, the majority turned away because the stories were unpleasant.¹⁹ Most of the POWs were proud, patriotic, and largely white career military officers. Of course, their failure in Vietnam had not shaken their faith in America’s cultural superiority to the rest of the world. Everett Alvarez learned in August 1964 that he was not a prisoner of war, “there is no war”, and Robinson Risner declared: “I had violated the sovereign air space of the Democratic republic of Vietnam. I was considered in the same way as those who used to prey on their coasts,” he was the same as a pirate.²⁰

Unlike the Barbary captivity narratives where Americans were captured by pirates as tradesmen, the POWs went to Vietnam by themselves so, they blamed the U.S. government to create this war. Jay Jenson declared: “We did not start this war. The men who started it, the leaders of the countries involved, and the men who decided how to conduct the war and the leaders who determined and involved those orders will be held responsible for those decisions and orders, not the men who carried them out.”²¹ In addition to Jim Stockdale who declares

that though his country acceded to the Geneva Convention of 1949, they later filed an exception against those captured in wars of aggression. They are nothing but common criminals, guilty of bombing schools, churches, and pagodas, crimes against humanity.²²

For the Vietnamese, the Hanoi Hilton was not a POW camp, but “a political prison” and as Stockdale realized that Political prisons are not for detention, for imposing punishment, or for preventing certain people from being at large. They are places where people are sent to be used for political purposes, or to have their minds changed, or both.²³ Philip Holt remarks that: “a prisoner –of –war compound, like a prison, as asylum, or a monastery, is a total institution whose inmates have little or no control over the ordering of their lives.”²⁴ According to the Camp Authority’s 1965 rules, an American captive was not a fighting man, but an imprisoned criminal who would be punished if he tried to escape, and rewarded if he cooperated. He could not communicate with others prisoners, but was required to report every violation of camp rules, to answer all questions, to provide all required documents, and to remember above all that he was responsible to the Camp Authority.²⁵

The POWs were in a dilemma between obeying the Vietnamese authorities to stay alive or side with their government that is the side of death, “you can side with the Vietnamese people and live, someday maybe return to your families and loved ones,” or “you can side with government and its policies of war and criminal aggression against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. That is the side of death.”²⁶ Jeremiah Denton was even more blunt when he declared that those who cooperated would be allowed to go home. Those who did not might face war crimes trials, with death or post war incarceration as possible punishment. The Camp

Authority felt “social maladjustment” was the basic human problem, and anyone who broke camp rules was “antisocial,” “maladjusted,” or “criminal.” Since most POW “crimes” violated camp rules, all confessions had to use the rules’ terms to prove that the prisoner knew his actions were criminal.²⁷

Unlike the captives in Barbary, the POWs followed the code of conduct and survival training. Los Angeles Times reported that: “the new code and the survival training are given much credit by Pentagon observers for the way American POWs have come through Vietnam.”²⁸ Article 1 starts with: “I am an American fighting man. I serve the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defence” According to Naval General Order (March 1957), an American fighting man must oppose the enemy whether in active participation in combat or as a prisoner of war. An American POW declares:

Our experience with communist captors has shown that they consider the prisoner of war camp an extension of the battlefield. The Code of Conduct similarly enjoins the American serviceman to continue the fight after the battle.²⁹

It means that the captors continued to treat the prisoners as if they were in the battlefield, not in the prison. The “Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces in the United States” is issued in 1955, was the POW’s single most important document. The Code of Conduct provided the foundation for two central articles of POWs faith. By following the Code of Conduct, the POWs had triumphed over the North Vietnamese, and by drifting away from the code, the American government and military had abandoned their duty, fallen into moral paralysis. The captivity narratives relate the suffering of the captives; the same rhetoric

is present in POWs narratives as it is stated in Article I: “I am prepared to give my life.” This article is based in self-sacrifice. For the POWs, however, the difficulty lay in deciding when to give their lives, and in some cases, in deciding what to do *when* prevented from dying.³⁰

Recent studies in early American literature have demonstrated the complexity in these authors’ efforts to construct notions of American identity in early, turbulent stages of the republic. A literary text is a reflection of the material and cultural context in which it was written as it is stated by New Historicism. Gesa Mackenthun points out that “early American novels suggest that identity, whether individual or collective, was a very volatile thing indeed in the period of economic and intellectual transition.”³¹ In *The life of Updike Underhill*, Royall Tyler contends that early American “identities were often forged out of the experience of cultural heterogeneity and geographical, which in the Age of Sail included oceanic, displacement.”³²

The constructions of American identity situated the United States against its ‘other’, and the cross-cultural encounter between the Americans and the Vietnamese was an occasion to revise their own identities. Not only they defended their identities, they also refused to ideological conversion to determine the American caprice to fight Communism. In the Declaration of Independence, the American revolutionary leader Thomas Jefferson was certainly influenced by the ideas of John Locke in emphasizing the twin concepts of liberty and equality. In *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), Locke outlines a theory of politics based on people’s natural rights: life, liberty, and the ownership of property. To Locke, the

task of the state was to protect these rights. Government was a contract between ruler and subjects, and rulers were granted power in order to assure their subjects' welfare.³³

The Vietnamese way of life was seen by the Americans as anti-modern; they were even blamed because of their poverty and the cultural differences. The belief that non-Westerners are barbaric and homogeneous is evident through Communism and its effects at home. It was seen by the USA as the evil which threatens the peace not only in Vietnam or the Asian continent, but the whole world, so the Americans believe that it is their duty to fight Communism because it contradicts its ideals of democracy. Jim Stockdale saw torture as Communism's fiercest method for attacking "that tiny vestige of freedom it was in your power to hold."³⁴ Only the tortured could understand fully Thomas Paine's remark that "those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it."³⁵

In *Orientalism* (2003), Edward Said claims that the Orientalists believe that: "there were-and are-cultures and nations whose location is in the east and their lives and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West."³⁶ In many occasions, Charlie Plumb spoke confidently about the primitive and impoverished nature of Vietnamese; he claimed that the first Vietnamese dictionary appeared only during his captivity. The Vietnamese language according to him, cannot express their knowledge succinctly, especially during philosophical arguments, because their language lacks sophisticated words which describe abstract concepts, and entire paragraphs are needed to express a thought which can be conveyed with three or four words of English. He also

claimed that everything they said was interpreted literally, because their captors “simply could not comprehend our use of humorous sarcasm or irony.”³⁷ It is also noted that the guards who wanted to learn few words in English could not speak it because it was beyond their purview. The POWs throughout their narratives describe the local culture as being primitive and insignificant. Edward Said writes about the Orientalist negative views by commenting:

And to very extent the Orientalist provides his own society with representation of the Orient[...] that respond to certain cultural, professional, national ,political, and economic requirements of the epoch [...]The role of positive knowledge is far from absolute.³⁸

The POWs believed that what they were doing in Vietnam was right, that they were trying to contain Communist aggression. For them, the South Vietnamese did not particularly care whether democracy or a dictatorship ruled their lives. According the them, Whereas the United States was built on democracy and freedom, Vietnam was ruled by tyrants under a corrupt political system. A case in point comes with Larry Chesley who despised the Vietnamese governmental system which prohibits freedom of thought and controls one’s every act, and sympathized with the citizens.³⁹ As for John McCain, he considers Vietnamese as food for voracious Communism so, it is their duty to liberate them from its shackles and help them to build their Imagined Community.⁴⁰ In this sense, Charlie Plumb declared that, “The most powerful free nation in history could not idly watch the Communist world gobble up and dissolve sovereign nations.”⁴¹ According to him, while the POWs were behind bars, the Vietnamese were captives inside their own bamboo borders. Donald Rander simply

“pitied” the Vietnamese people: “I was a prisoner for 5 years. They’re prisoners for the rest of their lives.”⁴²

According to the POWs, the struggle itself was always the same: a battle between American personal opportunity and Communist slavery. The Vietnam POWs had some fears about communist contamination. Charlie Plumb’s greatest worry was becoming a different person; he feared that his would be twisted that he would change his values and become a Communist.⁴³ He declared: “I’d simply have to sustain, to perpetuate my values by continually summoning and applying all the things I’d ever known. I would hang onto my faith in God and my love and respect for my country.”⁴⁴ Since millions of South Vietnamese did not want to live under Communism, it was the duty of Americans to help them to gain and defend their freedom, declares Jay Jensen.⁴⁵ This faith served as a parallel Code of Conduct. The POWs were considered as the first American fighting men, fighting the enemy of freedom and of their way of life, international Communism.

This battle, which Jeremiah Denton called America’s “classical” struggle, overruled any claim that the United States had trespassed in another nation’s affairs. It is justified on the ground that they were not only fighting the North Vietnamese but also maintaining the freedom of all Southeast Asia and the whole world.⁴⁶ The POWs even claimed that they managed and maintained their military discipline and their self-discipline despite the Camp Authority’s attempts to break their spirit. They also forced the Camp Authority to recognize them as officers of another total institution, the US military.

Unlike previous captivity narratives that framed captives as victims, the Vietnam captivity narratives celebrate resistance and endurance. The Hanoi Hilton became a symbol of communist cruelty and the American prisoners' brotherhood, resilience and survival under the communist oppression. The Americans identities were forged out of their experiences in the land imprisonment, refusing ideological conversion to determine the American desire to fight Communism. The Americans feel that it is their burden to combat communism as it goes against democracy. Thus, we understand that the definition of a hero in the Vietnam War differs from earlier models, such as the victim of foreign enslavement in barbary captivity narratives, or the faithful survivor who resists assimilation into native culture and remains true to God in Puritan captivity narratives. In Vietnam War, the hero is a resilient patriot who does not betray his country, resisting escape and enduring suffering, representing America strength against Communism, and focusing on brotherhood among POWs as the key aspect of heroism.

This study explores captivity narratives not solely as tales of imprisonment in a different culture, but also as a phenomenon rooted in ideology. Beyond physical confinement, individuals can be captured by texts. Captivity is also examined as a tool for understanding and reflecting on societal concerns experienced by those in captivity. Thus, a literary text is a reflection of the material and cultural context in which it was written as it is stated. The Vietnam War comes up each time the Americans think about sending men to fight. When troops went to Afghanistan in 2001, some feared it might be "another Vietnam." Even in the 21st century, Vietnam still has an impact.

Chapter Two: Somali Hostage Stories

The 20th century witnessed numerous attempts to bring democracy to countries that hitherto had been ruled by dictatorial or authoritarian regimes. Most of these efforts were promoted by the United States, and many of them were backed by U.S. military intervention and occupation. Because the 20th century was the American century, it was also the century of democratization. At the beginning of the 21st century, the U.S. sought to use military conquest and occupation to bring democracy to Iraq and its neighbors as well, particularly Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, is thus a part of civilization mission and promoting democracy for persecuted people. By now, many countries know what it means to be, in the words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “forced to be free.”⁴⁷

Unlike George W. H. Bush, Bill Clinton being a former governor had no foreign policy experience when he took office in January 1993.⁴⁸ This led him to focus more on domestic policy whereas for the foreign policy affairs he appointed a team of specialists, including Anthony Lake as his national security adviser and Warren Christopher as Secretary of State. Undoubtedly the Balkans, Somalia, and Tahiti were the most serious foreign policy problems the Clinton administration inherited in 1992.⁴⁹

Regarding the refusal to become involved in the intervention in the Balkans, some political analysts commented that the U.S. was guilty of all the damages and massacres that happened there. They added that “the U.S. was only ready to act quickly and decisively when it comes to the protection of its oil interests, but never otherwise.”⁵⁰ In this respect, UN correspondent Stanley Meisler commented on the Clinton administration saying that “the

Clinton administration has chosen to berate the organization as unwise in Somalia, cowardly in Bosnia, and inept in its bureaucracy.’’⁵¹ Just weeks before Clinton took office, President George H. W. Bush, in his televised speech December 5th, 1992, announced the U.S. participation in “Operation Restore Hope” in Somalia. To quote him:

I have given the order to Secretary Cheney to move a substantial American force into Somalia [...] American forces, will assist in Operation Restore Hope[...]First, we will create a secure environment [...] so that food can move from ships overland to the people in the countryside [...]And second, once we have created that secure environment, we will withdraw our troops. Our mission has a limited objective, to open the supply routes, to get the food moving, and to prepare the way for a UN peacekeeping force to keep it moving. This operation is not open-ended. We will not stay longer than is absolutely necessary.⁵²

President Bush clearly stated that he had dispatched American troops to Somalia to guard and distribute food supplies to millions of people suffering, starving and dying as a result of civil war.⁵³ The soldiers had been prepared for a “humanitarian mission,” and they were sent “to redress” worsening humanitarian situations. President Clinton was reluctant to send more military troops to this ignited zone. Nevertheless, things did not go exactly as planned; the situation quickly escalated.⁵⁴Initially successful, the mission grew to include nation-building and disarmament. This shift led to confrontations with Somali warlords like Mohamed Farrah Aidid. In October 1993, U.S. forces launched a raid to capture Aidid’s lieutenants of Mogadishu led to the Battle of Mogadishu, where two Black Hawk helicopters were shot down and 18 American soldiers were killed. The battle was latter dramatized in the book and film *Black Hawk Dow* (2002). During the presidential election of 2000 George W.

Bush, criticizing Bill Clinton's decisions on Somalia and Tahiti, promised to use American military force only to eliminate a potential threat to United States security. He declared:

(Somalia) started off as a humanitarian mission and it changed into a nation building mission, and that's where the mission went wrong. The mission was changed. And as a result, our nation paid a price. And so I don't think our troops ought to be used for what's called nation-building. I think our troops ought to be used to fight and win war. I think our troops ought to be used to help overthrow the dictator when it's in our best interests. But in this case, it was a nation-building exercise and same with Haiti. I wouldn't have supported either.⁵⁵

In 1995, the U.S. troops were withdrawn from Somalia, however, the Americans continued to venture to meet the 'exotic other', feeding their curiosity and weaving stories of captivity under Somali pirates. Unlike the Barbary captivity narratives where pirates were operating just at sea, pirates in Somalia extended their work to the land, kidnapping Americans and asking for huge ransom funds. The term 'pirate' served as a haunting reminder to Americans that the threat of the Barbary Pirates had resurged, indicating that their enemy had not been defeated but always present. In fact, texts written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries continue to shape American perception of the enemy.

In 2012, American journalist Michael Scott Moore traveled to Somalia to explore the issue of piracy and to write about a pirate gang that had been captured two years earlier when they tried to hijack the MV Taipan, a German cargo ship, near Somalia. Funded by a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, he thought that a book about the case and some underreported aspects of Somali piracy might be interesting. Unfortunately, Moore was kidnapped and captured by Somali pirates for \$ 20 million ransom. For almost two years and

a half of captivity, he was subjugated to all horrid conditions that can break even the strongest spirits, as he reported. He endured physical as well as psychological suffering and difficult circumstances of isolation, terror, and starvation.⁵⁶

He was held in various locations in Somalia, including remote desert where conditions were appalling and basic necessities were scarce. His solitary confinement had long-lasting effects on his mental health, leading him to hallucinations and trauma. The latter was worsened when he witnessed the suffering of other hostages, such as seeing them being abused, tortured, or killed. When his comrade, Rolly Tambara, was tortured, Moore commented that : “It was a torture scene from the days when Ottoman officials would tie the feet of criminals and subject them to ‘*bastinado*’, or public foot-whipping. Two teenagers filmed it.”⁵⁷ It is clear that Moore is well prepared for his trip to Somalia, having extensively studied Barbary captivity narratives, where he learned about the *bastinado* being used as a common form of punishment.

It is refutable that the historical context surrounding Moore’s modern captivity narratives would eliminate the themes prevalent in early Barbary captivity narratives. Themes such as Islamic barbarism, slavery and Jihad are likely to persist and reappear in these narratives despite the passage of time. The notion of Jihad is emphasized by Moore when he confronted his Muslim guard, pointing that theft goes against the principles of Islam. After a week or two he answered his question arguing that Koran called for struggle against nonbelievers. Thieving from infidels therefore was not theft, according to his Somali captor: “ ‘Jews, Christians, Buddhists ...’ OK to steal from them, he implied. ‘Muslim’, no.”⁵⁸ This

assertion is reinforced early on, notably in the book's third sentence: "A pirate, he kick my Bible."⁵⁹ This statement should not be taken as an innocent comment from Rolly, Moore's companion in Captivity, who had already expressed concern about the pirate's behavior at the beginning of the novel. While he was reading the bible, a Somali approached him, clearly unwilling to handle it. Disturbed by its presence: "The sight of a Bible offended him,"⁶⁰ he got rid of it by kicking it aside with "his salty bare foot."⁶¹

Another theme that echoes the captivity narratives in North Africa is the food, as it serves as a fundamental norm of cultural understanding that distinguishes between the home culture and the host one. Even the food provided in captivity was not sufficient for survival; Moore's diet for several months consisted solely of bread, a bottle of water and a can of tuna. Occasionally, he was given cooked pasta or rice, however, these meager portions were not sufficient to Moore who would lose about forty pounds in two months. The insufficient food was one of the reasons that accelerated the culture shock since it is one of the norms of cultural understanding. Moore was not used to this diet, in other words, he cannot digest very easily because of the cultural contradiction to their own dietary regime. The latter is repulsive not in terms of biology but in terms of what it signifies. Eating staple foods peculiar to the Somali pirates is similar to an ingestion of another identity, causing nausea in terms of biological reaction. Eating the Somali food is certainly not a physical hardship, but it is psychologically enervating.

After his release, Moore shared his ordeal to raise awareness about the dangers faced by journalists in Somalia under the pirates. His story was aimed to preserve his experience in

captivity so that it could be part of the national memory, and continued the tradition of captivity narrative genre. It appears that Moore was adamant in adhering in the American historical legacy of dehumanizing the other. Moore release received a heavy media coverage and public opinion support.

In 2014, negotiators paid a ransom of \$1.6 million to secure Moore's release. Moore has said his family funded the ransom payment, reminding us of ransom funds paid for the Barbary pirates in the coast of Algiers. In his famous book *The Desert and the Sea: 977 Days Captive on the Somali Pirate Coast* (2018), he provides contemporary readers with a range of information about the history of piracy, the impact of postcolonialism on Somalia, and the American foreign policy at both national and international levels in dealing with hostages and ransom negotiations.

One of the Somali stories that can be examined further is that of Jessica Buchanan, which provides insights into captivity, endurance, and survival in dire circumstances. In 2021, she was kidnapped in Somalia, where she was an aid worker, helping to raise awareness about how to avoid land mines. She loved her life: "From a creative perspective, Africa is a feast for the eyes. There's always something to look at, something new to experience,"⁶² she says. "I appreciated the simplicity, too. People would suffer, but were also happy, and I craved that. I felt like my work meant something."⁶³ On a trip back from the south following a training session, she found their convoy surrounded by armed Somalians. She discovered later on that the man responsible for their protection had sold them out to land pirates, who asked for a ransom of up to \$45 million. The field office was

located in an unstable region where territories were marked by invisible borders, controlled by warring clans and the Islamist group al-Shabaab. Though Buchanan has a thyroid condition and was developing a kidney infection, her kidnappers did not provide any medicine. Instead, they forced her to sleep on a mat in the open desert for ninety-three days, until her release by the special operation forces.⁶⁴

The first moments of abduction, she was consumed by a wave of physical terror; her thoughts vanished and she felt as if she were being roasted alive. Jessica Buchanan's brain seized up, struggling to breathe because she realized that her life changed forever. Buchanan believed that she was marching to death when they stopped in scrub desert. Her narrative portrayed moments of loneliness, boredom and frustration, but never despair. "I think we realised that if we allowed ourselves despair, we were as good as dead."⁶⁵In *Impossible Odds: The Kidnapping of Jessica Buchanan and Her Dramatic Rescue by SEAL Team Six* (2014), Buchanan provides her experience of being kidnapped by Somali pirates and her harrowing rescue by the U.S. Navy. She recounts her hardship in captivity and her emotional journey where she showed resilience and hope.

One of the challenging aspects of her ordeal was being held in the desert of Somalia. She contends that "In the daytime, you're hot and sweating and gross; at night, you're cold – there's nothing blocking the wind. Every morning, you wake up drenched – and you're always, always covered in dust."⁶⁶ The extreme heat and the lack of basic necessities worsened her situation especially that she had health issues. The absence of sanitation and limited water supply brought on a urinary tract infection that spread to Buchanan's kidneys

and she spent much of her time curled up in pain.⁶⁷ Ransom negotiations had stalled; their captors were losing patience and constantly threatening to sell them on to al-Shabaab for \$5m.

The constant threat of violence from her captors was manifested from the first encounter. She contends that while sleeping in the freezing desert, machine guns set up on tripods, their barrels aimed straight at her head. She would not think about escape since, “They w’d grab us by the hair and smack us with their guns, scream in our faces, and push us to the ground.”⁶⁸ Even the water is dirty, as it had been served in the same bucket used to fill cars with diesel. The food was not sufficient; they received a small can of tuna with stale bread once a day.

In describing the man who was going through her bag and wallet to find something important, she said : “He was high on khat [the flowering plant chewed for its stimulating effect] – he had the rolling eyes, the stained teeth and he was mumbling and laughing; giddy, erratic.”⁶⁹ The dehumanization of the captors is one of the traditions prevalent in the captivity narrative genre in order to help the captives mentally distance themselves from their captors as less than human. It is also a way for Buchanan to justify her own resistance rather despair, as she declared, “I think we realized that if we allowed ourselves despair, we were as good as dead.”⁷⁰ By portraying the captors as cruel and stripping their captors of their humanity, the captives may feel empowered to raise sympathy at home.

In order to be less disposal, she invented a son, knowing that mothers in Somali culture hold a higher status. As the only woman in the camp, she sleeps with her arms crossed over her chest. Her captors threaten her with an instant knock on the ground and a gun in her face

in case she shows emotions, in attempt to manipulate them. Until today, she suffers from panic attacks and car travel reminds her of the car hijacked by the pirates who shouting and turned everything upside down. Even the dust and sand caused her to wake in the night, crying hysterically. “Usually, though, I can manage pretty well. I’ve been through a lot of therapy.”⁷¹

She also dealt with sexual assault from her interpreter Jabreel, who would lie beside her at night, touching her, stroking her. Buchanan had to hold him off without angering him, reminding him that she is married. “I don’t know how I wasn’t raped,”⁷² she says. “I had a very clear awareness that it was coming and considered myself lucky every time I managed to avoid it.”⁷³ It is the tradition in captivity narratives that American female captives resist any sexual assault by their captors. As American women, they were expected to maintain their purity and virtue. The sexual threat worsened Buchanan’s captivity, emphasizing her vulnerability and struggle to resist and protect herself.

As time passed, Buchanan was allowed to cook :“Collecting wood for the fire, cooking rice, making bread was kind of empowering. I’d learned a new skill. I remember thinking: ‘If I get out of here, I can’t wait to show my husband how I can bake bread in the sand!’ It gave me some sort of autonomy.”⁷⁴ She also made an English vocabulary game using strips of cardboard to pass time. “Some of the men got really proud of themselves, learning English words – they were all bored,”⁷⁵ she says. That game stopped after an order from one of the leaders.

In order to escape her ordeal, Buchanan imagined herself away every night “I had a very vivid visualisation before I went to sleep,”⁷⁶ she says. She imagined herself in her

kitchen, making something like a pasta sauce, drinking red wine. She thought about her apartment and her husband Erik, hoping to reunite again. Imagination allows her to escape from her physical confines, offering a relief from the horrors of captivity and providing a sense of solace in their minds. Through imagination, the captives cope with their traumatic situations by mentally transporting themselves to a different realm or time, providing a temporary sanctuary from their reality of their imprisonment. By creating vivid mental images and scenarios, Buchanan distracted herself from her immediate ordeal, offering a sense of hope, resilience, and allowing her to preserve their sense of identity and agency despite their challenging circumstances.

After ninety-three days in captivity, Buchanan was rescued by the U.S. Navy Seals, describing her rescue as movie-worthy rescue with the American soldiers parachuted close to the camp. The intense media coverage surrounding her rescue played a crucial role in shaping public perception, gaining public support for the U.S. government policy in the region. Her story, amplified through various media outlets, served to justify the American intervention in Somalia as a legitimate response to a recognized threat to national security. Even the president Obama asked them to free her, highlighting the government's responsibility to address and resolve such issue in order to ensure the welfare of the nation. By drawing attention to Buchanan's plight, the importance of prioritizing the needs and safety of citizens is underscored.

She described the men who rescued her as incredible because they went back into a war zone to get her bag, basically her dead mother's ring.⁷⁷ Her husband, Erik

Landemalm, who was also an aid worker in Somalia declared that he is not blaming Somalia for what happened to his wife. He rather condemns the gangsters and the pirates, and this incident can happen anywhere in the world not only in Somalia. President Obama order for her rescue, shows that the plight of a citizen concerns the nation as a whole. She declares: “It didn’t occur to me that rescues took place for people who weren’t military. I’m still unpacking that today and it’s really humbling to think the US government put that in motion. When one of the men started talking to me and said my name, I was overwhelmed by shock. All I could say was: ‘You’re American?’ It just didn’t compute.”⁷⁸ After her rescue, what Buchanan calls “surviving survival”, has been no less challenging. “Everyone wants to hear about the event, but it’s the day in, day out of living that’s the real hard work,”⁷⁹ she says.

Unlike male POWs, women heroes like Buchanan are often sensationalized and infantilized. In her expression of female virtue, Jessica Buchanan emphasized the importance of love and loyalty towards her country. This reminds us of Maria Martin whose captivity narrative of the seventeenth century turns around her resistance to the “bashaw’s” attempt to make her a concubine. She described how she was loaded with chains because of her decision not to sell out her virtue in exchange of an easy life in an Oriental harem, adopting the contours of the gothic literature prevalent in her time.

Despite the different circumstances of their release, Moore through ransom, and Buchanan through rescue by the U.S. Naval, both of them were promoted as heroes of the war on terrorism. With heavy media coverage, the American government succeeded to convince its citizens that Somalia is a threat to the national security. What already people

know about Somalia is a creation of U.S. media and hostage stories, condemning the horrid deeds committed against the humanitarian relief efforts initiated by the U.N. and fully supported by the U.S. government. Misleading stories of atrocities began to pour forth, looking to impress the readers at home as part of efforts to raise money towards relieving them from the horrid conditions of captivity. Both narratives emphasize American heroism versus Islamic extremism, similar to Barbary captivity narratives, turning captives into symbols of national resilience. The hero's captivity is used to demonize the enemy, as civilians, both Moore and Buchanan were used as a justification for further military intervention. Edward Said notes that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.⁸⁰

In *The Pirates of Somalia: Inside Their Hidden World* (2011), Jay Bahadur provides firsthand account and insights into the working of piracy in Somalia. His book offers a detailed understanding of how piracy operates as an organized enterprise rather than a chaotic form of criminality. As a Canadian journalist, Bahadur challenged mainstream media portrayals, he explores the social, political, and economic factors that gave rise to piracy, shedding light on the most controversial criminal phenomena of the 21st century. He realized that it is challenging for the outside world to know about the pirates' lives. On this point, he writes:

Somalia is like a country out of a twisted fairy tale, an ethereal land given substance only by the stories we are told of it. Everything known by the outside world has been constructed from the news reports spilling out of the country over the last twenty years: warlords, famine, Black Hawks, Jihads, and now pirates.⁸¹

Chapter Three: Iraq War and Stories of American Imprisonment

America is a strong nation and honorable in the use of our strength. We exercise power without conquest, and we sacrifice for the liberty of strangers. Americans are a free people, who know that freedom is the right of every person and the future of every nation.⁸²

These are the words of George W. Bush 2003 State of the Union speech. His speech was delivered less than two months before the tanks rolled into Iraq. The world will become an empire of liberty under the leadership of the United States, a country that considers itself entitled to tell everyone else what freedom means and impose itself as ‘the standard of the world’. After 9/11, any foreign policy problem could be resolved by military power. The invasion of Afghanistan and the Iraq war were a mere example of this. For Bush Senior, 9/11 ranks with Pearl Harbor. In a speech at Boston on 14 September 2001, he sent a message to his son where he invited him to end unilateralism, in his message he said:

Just as Pearl Harbor awakened this country from the notion that we could somehow avoid the call to duty and defend freedom in Europe and Asia in World War II, so, too, should this most recent surprise attack erase the concept in some quarters that America can somehow go it alone in the fight against terrorism or in anything else for that matter.⁸³

Regarding the case of Iraq, following the first Gulf War and regardless of the heavy sanctions against Saddam’s regime, the neo-conservatives were not satisfied. Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, and Richard Perle, among others, sent a letter to President Clinton in 1998 where they urged him for military action to overthrow the ‘dictator’ regime in Iraq. They wrote:

The only acceptable strategy is one that eliminates the possibility that Iraq will be able to use or threaten to use WMD. In the near term, this means a willingness to undertake military action as diplomacy is clearly failing. In the longer term, it means removing Saddam Hussein and his regime from power. That now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy.⁸⁴

To approve the US's appeal for the immediate intervention in Iraq, in 2002, the United Nations Security Council called for Iraq to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors to verify whether it has WMD or not. After the inspection The United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) found no evidence as it is asserted by Top United Nations weapons inspector Hans Blix:

No evidence had so far been found of weapons of mass destruction being moved around by truck, of mobile production units for biological weapons or of underground facilities for chemical or biological production or storage, as claimed by intelligence authorities.⁸⁵

Although some degraded remnants of abandoned chemical weapons from before 1991 were found, they were not the weapons which had been the main arguments for intervention in Iraq. The failure to find any WMD embarrassed Bush; this led him to change the reason of the intervention 'to emphasize human rights and promotion of democracy.'⁸⁶ Despite the rejection and the strong disagreement from several of its allies, the U.S. went ahead in early March 2003 with the intervention in Iraq. That war of choice quickly became very expensive.

Bush started the process of creating a new foreign policy by establishing new commitments for USA's overseas involvement.⁸⁷ He changed the American foreign policy 'to a more unilateralist position.' The latter can be demonstrated in his decision to attack Iraq in 2003 without a United Nations mandate.⁸⁸ The focus of this military force would also be

on foreign governments that harbor and support it, i.e. “terrorism.” This was what have been called “the Bush Doctrine.”⁸⁹ For his policy following the 9/11 attacks Bush gained a considerable support from the American public. He also enjoyed a noticeable support in Congress during that period, to the point that Congress moved fast in order to provide him support for “the war against terror.” The U.S. official definition of the same term is somehow slightly different. Soon after the attacks of the 11th of September took place on the America soil, a new definition of “terrorism” was set by President Bush and his administration.⁹⁰ He defined terrorism with these words:

The term “terrorism” means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience [...] and involving citizens or the territory of more than one country.⁹¹

This U.S. definition of “terrorism” outlines that the violent actions are done generally by subnational groups or clandestine agents, which excludes violent actions from official states and governments to be terror. By this, the USA is, therefore, excluding the attacks on Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 from being acts of terrorism.⁹²

In “Address to the Nation on the War on Terror” 2006, Bush asserts that they are fighting for civilization to maintain the way of life enjoyed by free nations, “And we’re fighting for the possibility that good and decent people across the Middle East can raise up societies based on freedom and tolerance and personal dignity.”⁹³ As a result, his rhetoric has divided the world into two camps, in Samuel Huntington’s words, two conflicting blocks “The West and the Rest.”⁹⁴ According to Maureen Montgomery, “since its emergence as a concept

in the late-eighteenth century in Western Europe, acts of extraordinary violence and brutality have been committed in the name of civilization.’’⁹⁵ In his regard, Edward Said explains that:

Throughout history, occupying, expansionist powers have always invented theories to justify such practices. The U.S had the theory of Manifest Destiny in the 1800s: such ‘redeeming ideas’ dignify the practice of competition and clash whose real purpose is self-aggrandizement, power and unrestrained self-pride.⁹⁶

Bush put the attacks of 9/11 both in religious terms, when he declared ‘this crusade, this war on terrorism is going to take a while’⁹⁷ and in civilizational ones: ‘this is civilization’s fight.’⁹⁸ Ronald Reagan, declared that the U.S. had not by choice but rather by destiny the role of ‘the watchman on the walls of world freedom.’⁹⁹ He argued that the U.S.’ previous intervention in Iraq was for two major reasons, first, it was out of their duty since they were ‘the only remaining superpower’ and second because it was their only ‘opportunity to lead.’¹⁰⁰ Iraq war evoked the ghosts of Vietnam and reminded the American of the waste war that they could have avoided. It was another unpopular war, where Bush emphasized the threat to U.S. credibility posed by any retreat from Iraq, an argument that, in some extent, echoed the face-saving rhetoric used by the administrations of presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon during the Vietnam war. In the Vietnam War, the soldiers were unwillingly enlisted, whereas the war in Iraq was fought by an all-volunteer army. More Americans view Iraq as the kind of quagmire that Vietnam had become for an earlier generation.

After Britain’s announcement that it would withdraw almost a quarter of its troops in coming months will only add to Americans’ sense of going it alone in Iraq, as they felt in Vietnam when few Western allies joined it. Polls showed that a majority of the U.S. public

thinks it was a mistake to go into Iraq in the first place. Amid mass protest during Vietnam War, Congress rescinded the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that Johnson used to justify escalation in Southeast Asia. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the United States vice president, Dick Cheney, argued that the Vietnam war and the Watergate scandal wrongly eroded the president's powers and who used the "war on terrorism" to strengthen them. Cheney has been a leading voice pressing a new emphasis on possible consequences of any Iraq withdrawal, a blow to the U.S. prestige and other outcomes that critics have called a revival of the old "domino theory."¹⁰¹

Instead of Asia falling to Communism, the administration warns Iraq could become the first Arab state to fall to Islamic terrorism, giving Al Qaeda a base from which to attack U.S. allies and interests. Cheney declared that if they leave Iraq before the mission is completed, the enemy is going to come after them. They wanted to complete the mission and return with honor. The Iraq War has a complex relation with the major dimensions of American foreign policy, particularly the diplomatic, military, and political , but it is increasingly evident that the war policy of the Bush administration represents a radical abandonment of traditional American ways of dealing with the world, ways that overall have served the United States very well.¹⁰² According to James Kurth, the Iraq War is likely, however, to cause more grave and long-term injury to the U.S. military and to U.S. efforts to promote democracy abroad. This is because of its violations of the traditional American way of war and way of democratization.¹⁰³

Stories of captivity were also present in the land of Saddam, where the story of Jessica Lynch imprisonment in an ambush in Nasiriyah and Jill Carroll kidnapping in Baghdad reminds us of Susana Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers* (1794). The intense public fascination with their captivity in Iraq and rescue and the less-than-subtle spin the events received in the hands of the military and the media made it abundantly clear that Rowson's play and other texts, written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries cannot be consigned to a dry past full of impossible religious beliefs and short on alternative narrative thrills.

Melani McAlister, a professor of American studies at George Washington University, characterized the heavily mythologized version of the story that initially circulated as "the latest iteration of a classic American war fantasy: the captivity narrative."¹⁰⁴ McAlister brought up parallels between Lynch and the first, most famous captive in the American tradition, Mary Rowlandson. McAlister argues that America, for more than two centuries, the liberation of captives into a trope for American righteousness was made.¹⁰⁵

These stories encouraged early Americans to see themselves not just as members of a community under God, as Rowson's play and Rowlandson's narrative emphasize, but as part of a nation finding its way in a complex international scene. The story of Jessica Lynch's nine days of confinement and Jill Carroll eighty-two in the land of Saddam Hussein dovetails with the explicitly political concerns of the Barbary captivity tradition. It might not be going too far to see women such as Lynch and Carroll as embodiments of the values of republican motherhood, the ideology through which the distinct but contained feminism of Rowson and other early national women was channeled. Jessica Lynch and her comrades, who express

female virtue much as she and other patriotic women of the period envisioned it, as a combination of love of country combined with devotion to family and other traditional female qualities.¹⁰⁶

Lynch, just nineteen at the time, would soon be transformed from a young woman from Palestine, West Virginia, into a series of symbols.¹⁰⁷ Lynch was part of a maintenance company that took a wrong turn and was ambushed by Iraqi soldiers on March 23, 2003. Eleven of her fellow soldiers were killed. Six, including Lynch, were wounded. She was seriously injured after the vehicle she was riding in was ambushed and crashed. She was captured by the Iraqis, and her injuries were treated at a local hospital. Once she was rescued, the U.S. military immediately began promoting her as a hero of the war on terror. The rescue was videotaped with the grainy images of soldiers climbing stairs to find her, creating a kind of Hollywood-style tribute to those who dared to bring back their fellow soldier. The videotape was played on television networks anxious for positive news about the intervention. Her rescue was called a tribute to American Values by Colonel Oliver North who drew a stark contrast to the terrorists of 9/11.¹⁰⁸

Women's Studies scholar Carol Mason notes: "In addition to the rumor that Lynch had fired her weapon repeatedly, the media suggested that she had been sexually violated in the Iraqi hospital, arousing a whole host of old, nationalistic fears about white women's vulnerability."¹⁰⁹ The reality of Lynch's situation, however, was a bit more mundane. Jessica Lynch became an icon of the war. An all-American heroine, the story of her capture by the Iraqis and her rescue by US special forces became one of the great patriotic moments of the

conflict. Her rescue provides a remarkable insight into the real influence of Hollywood producers on the Pentagon's media managers, and has produced a template from which America hopes to present its future wars.¹¹⁰ Lynch later told a congressional committee and wrote in her own biography that her injuries were the result of the vehicle crash, not torture, and that, while she tried to resist her captors, her rifle jammed. Her rescue was greeted with no resistance from the Iraqis. She also said that accounts of abuse by her captors were exaggerated.

A biographical account of her ordeal, *I Am a Soldier, Too: The Jessica Lynch Story*, was written by New York Times journalist Rick Bragg and published by Knopf in 2003. Jessica Lynch thus became more than an army supply clerk; she became a story about a country girl who fought bravely then was saved from 'barbaric' Iraqis. A story to win the hearts and minds of an American public who was becoming more and more disturbed over the absence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, as Iraqi and American casualties multiplied, and as rebellion against the American intervention increased. The story of Jessica Lynch gave hope that the preemptive war in Iraq was right and good, not a matter of rash military extremism.¹¹¹

Minnie Bruce Pratt claims that "none of what was reported was accurate, including the supposed violence against Private Lynch at the hands of the Iraqis. It turns out that the doctors had been trying to get her to U.S. troops only to have their ambulance fired upon repeatedly."¹¹² This assertion parallels the contention that the stories about Lynch's combat skills and abuse in the Iraqi hospital were false. Such contentions were confirmed when

Jessica Lynch herself denied that she fired her weapon during her capture and that she was mistreated at the hospital. She refused to go along with the social script that was written for her, a script in which a poor country girl from West Virginia was saved from the brutality and barbarism of the Iraqis.

Like Jessica Lynch, Jill Carroll's captivity had received heavy news coverage around the world. Jill is a journalist and freelance writer, kidnapped on January 2006 in Baghdad, in an attack that killed her Iraqi interpreter, where a meeting with Sunni politician Adnan Dulaimi was delayed, then canceled. Jill felt that she needed to cover the war from different perspectives without the military protection, to tell the Iraqis' side of the story. Later on, she appeared in a silent 20-second video aired by Al Jazeera, which said her abductors gave the United States 72 hours to free female prisoners in Iraq or she would be killed. The U.S. military said it would release five Iraqi women detainees; a move demanded by the kidnappers of American reporter Jill Carroll to spare her life. The group that claimed to have abducted Carroll, the Vengeance Brigade, later released a video in which she praised her captors. She denounced Bush and the U.S. military presence in Iraq and predicted that the 'insurgents' would ultimately win the war. She said of Bush, "He needs to stop this war. He knows this war is wrong."¹¹³

After her release, Jill declared that she had been well treated by her captors, though she had no idea where she was being held during her captivity, and although she said her small room was comfortable and had a shower nearby, she could not move beyond its immediate confines. She was allowed to watch television only once, and saw only one

newspaper. After her release, the Islamic party's leader, Tariq al-Hashemi, offered her a Koran at the end of her brief television interview and, speaking in English, said: "Don't forget the Iraqi people." Islamic principles had ensured her good treatment, he said.¹¹⁴

Carroll also declared that she felt guilty that she was about to be released while Iraqi women were still being held by U.S. forces. She compared her treatment favorably with that of Iraqi women detainees, who she said suffered torture at Abu Ghraib prison. Carroll said her captors had not harmed her and had fed her well. She had eaten even when she was not hungry, rather than give offense by turning down meals, she said, and her face was rounder after the months without exercise.¹¹⁵

Carroll was shocked by the extensive media coverage and public interest of her hostage crisis. Her captivity had been marked by intense support on her behalf from US news organizations as well as religious and political leaders in Iraq. "Having Jill Carroll released today is probably a signal that the campaign on her behalf has not been in vain,"¹¹⁶ said Lucie Morillon, the Washington representative of Reporters Without Borders. "We do believe that it helped to have this huge mobilisation of people explaining that she is a journalist and she was not supposed to be a target, that she was just doing her profession and was a neutral observer."¹¹⁷ Speaking at a news conference in Berlin, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Carroll's release "is something that people across the world have worked for and prayed for."¹¹⁸ Even President Bush, on a visit to Cancun, Mexico, said, "I'm really grateful she was released and thank those who worked hard for her release, and we're glad she's alive."¹¹⁹ Her release followed a comprehensive media campaign by family members,

religious and political leaders in Iraq and around the world and the Boston-based Monitor. Her parents made regular appearances on English and Arabic-language television programs.

In a series called *Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story* (2006), Jill provides a first-person account of her kidnapping, the murder of her partner, and her initial days in captivity. This is a fascinating look at the thoughts and feeling of a victim of a kidnapping plot, and the mindset and operational methods of her captors. The murder of her professional partner weighed heavily on Jill's conscience. Her treatment during capture juxtaposed with his brutal murder was perplexing. Jill was allowed to channel surf, played with the children of the family at the safe house, and asked what kind of food she preferred. Following these declarations, Jill was described as an insurgent, terrorist sympathizer, "anti-war" and anti-American. She was savaged for the video taken at Dulaimi's headquarters on the day of her release, because she wore the hijab and said those who imprisoned her treated her kindly. Those who wrongly criticized Jill fail to realize that she was still in fear for her safety when she made the tape.¹²⁰ John Podhoretz wrote the following on the collective *National Review* blog, The Corner:

It's wonderful that she's free, but after watching someone who was a hostage for three months say on television she was well-treated because she wasn't beaten or killed, while being dressed in the garb of a modest Muslim woman rather than the non-Muslim woman she actually is, I expect there will be some Stockholm syndrome talk in the coming days.¹²¹

Indeed, the declaration of Jill did not conform to the prevalent discourse that needs to build a black image of the Iraqis. After heavy coverage, they did not expect such declaration, and dressing into a Muslim dress was seen as a threat to their non-Muslim identity, as well as

an attempt to acculturation or even conversion. John Podhoretz declaration, though recent, harkens back the colonial discourse established by Cotton Mather who urged the captives to refuse any kind of acculturation or conversion since it threatens the nation salvation. Thus, Jill was criticized and accused of being anti-American and terrorist sympathizer simply because she did not serve their political agenda, showcasing the contradictions and complexities of war propaganda. Despite their effort to manipulate the public opinion through heavy coverage, her interview completely undermined their agenda, exposing the biases inherent in the manufactured narratives of war propaganda.

According to various scholars, Jessica Lynch and Jill Carroll stories were popular because they reflected themes that entertainment media have made recognizable in tales about U.S. soldiers in Vietnam. Key among the themes are a small group or single American soldier pitted against “hordes of non-Europeans” who intend to punish “oppressed,” “indigenous” “natives” in “peasant villages”¹²² Tarak Barkawi successfully uses these observations to make the point that “the rewriting of the Vietnam War was crucial to politically enabling the conquest and occupation of Iraq for purposes of liberating the oppressed Iraqi people.”¹²³

According to Carol Mason, two of the spurious reasons for invading Afghanistan and Iraq have been liberating women from repressive fundamentalism and keeping women free from barbaric terrorism.¹²⁴ This again reminds us of Rowson’s play where scenes of gendered oppression are alluded to throughout *Slaves in Algiers*(1974), although Rowson’s emphasis is on moral and emotional pain rather than spectacles of physical suffering. Rowson dwells on the pain faced by both Muslim and captive American women, who are both in one way or

another in bondage to male tyrants and their lusts. The play's complicated plot involves American male captives who, as they seek freedom, are pursued by Muslim women, who wish to escape gender oppression by escaping with Christian lovers, and American female captives who teach and inspire the women of Algiers.¹²⁵

For many in the United States in particular, Lynch became a symbol of the righteousness of the U.S. "War on Terror," of "American values," of modern femininity. Oliver North, for example, remarked that "the rescue of Private Lynch is a story from which the critics can learn a lesson. It is a story about the value of life and how the world's most powerful military employs its extensive resources and risks its most elite forces to save and rescue a single soldier because they view every life as precious."¹²⁶ Her story was dramatized by the army rescue video, of white Western soldiers saving Lynch from dark non-Europeans, even medical report states that "she was the victim of anal sexual assault."¹²⁷ Lynch does not remember any such assault and her memoirs do not include any complaints about that kind of violation. This is evidence of how power and authority structures influence the captivity narratives.

Jessica Lynch story, replete with fears of maintaining bodily integrity against a non-European 'other,' defended the war in Iraq as a civilizing mission and deflected allegations that Americans were barbaric invaders by directing public attention to a woman whose fighting spirit and safety became the popular reason for war in Iraq. Controversies ensued over why the video was taken, how it got circulated, and what the military said about it. Some said the actions seen on the Lynch's video seemed staged like a movie or a publicity stunt.

Also, the story seemed fishy. “It didn’t pass the smell test,” said a journalist for Newsday. “‘She’s a 19-year-old supply clerk, and they made her sound like Rambo.’”¹²⁸

It is clear that modern captivity narratives do not differ from the older ones in that the themes and characterizations developed in any text reflect those commonly found in the society of a given time period. The same humiliation was strongly felt by in Barbary captivity narratives is felt by American prisoners in Vietnam as result of being enslaved by a culture that is supposed inferior to his natal culture, especially that the majority are military aviators. The strong public interest with the narratives written from the Vietnam to the Iraq War is a proof that the captivity genre is immortal in the American minds. The captivity narratives cannot be confined to the past, since they reflect historical conditions and can provide insights into the cultural and social issues of a particular time period. Their significance lies in the fact that they shaped the American identity, ideology and foreign policy by serving as means of reinforcing and justifying expansion.

In addition to corporeal captivity, one can also be captured by texts. Captivity is also looked at as an epistemological tool reflecting and thinking about issues prevalent in the captive’s society. From the first encounter with the ‘other’, the captivity narratives are not written innocently to relate the physical hardships of their authors. They were framed to meet the social needs, requirements, and prerequisites of a particular generation at a specific point in time. The variety of interpretive frameworks, adopted by people to explain away their condition, accounts for the adequacy of captivity to appear in several other shapes and disguises, among which ideology would be no exception.

From Mary Rowlandson's Puritan captivity narrative which marked the beginning of Indian captivity to Jessica Lynch story of imprisonment in Iraq, captivity was best illustrated beyond the boundaries of the dire physical circumstances to that of ideology. As an infant nation, America constructed its identity through the ideas of Puritanism under the Founding Fathers. The puritans who settled in Boston and later the rest of New England, believed God had made them a second chosen people and had sent them to the New World to save the corrupt and decadent Old World. For them, Boston was a new Jerusalem and a new Israel, a new Promised Land. This belief eventually seeped out of New England to much of the rest of America and is still held by many citizens today.

Vietnam and Iraq wars are said to be needless wars where thousand Americans lost their lives, in addition to the millions of hideous wounds, the inestimable emotional and psychological suffering, and the mourning of countless families. None of these countries posed a grave threat to the United States or even came close to doing so. On the contrary, these conflicts undermined national well-being, the war in Vietnam heightened Cold War tensions that threatened to spill over into nuclear conflict. The Iraq War exacerbated terrorist threats and terrorist actions against the United States and its allies. All these conflicts contradicted basic American values, especially the right of self-determination for all peoples. Atrocities committed by some American forces in these wars put into question the moral standing of the United States.

In addition to the fact that the administration has tried to establish stability and peace promoting liberal democracy while imposing military occupation. The Iraq War represents a

perversion of the traditional American way of democratization. Some Americans did remember the Vietnam waste war and launched huge demonstrations against going to war in Iraq, the Bush administration was determined to go to war, no matter what.

It is clear that the Americans were drawn into the war as means to enforce the notion of exceptionalism, a concept that not only provides ideological justification for colonialism, capitalism, empire, and white supremacy, but also establishes a normalized theoretical framework for how the world is and should be structured, inevitably making criminals out of the people opposing U.S. dominance, within the nation and abroad. As Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who served in both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, wrote in his memoirs, there were no government experts on Vietnam to inform them about the history, culture, and likelihood of American success in that unhappy land.¹²⁹

American exceptionalism has always presumed national innocence despite imposing centuries of war and plunder. The U.S. has been at war for over ninety percent of its existence. These wars have all been justified as necessary ventures meant to defend or expand America's so-called founding values and beliefs. A consequence of centuries of endless war has been the historical tendency of the U.S. to erase from consciousness the realities that surround American domestic and international policy, not to mention the system of imperialism that governs both. They argue that their role in the world is about ideals such as freedom, human rights more than money and guns. Viet Thanh Nguyen contends that Americans are confused people because they cannot admit this contradiction.¹³⁰ They believe in a universe of divine justice where the human race is guilty of sin, but they also believe in a secular justice where

human beings are presumed innocent. They pretend they are eternally innocent no matter how many times they lose their innocence. The problem is that those who insist on their innocence believe anything they do is just.

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**Part Three: Framing the Self and the Other: A
Postcolonial Perspective on Cultural Boundaries**

This part deals with the portrayal of Vietnamese as the ‘other’ by the American prisoners in their captivity narratives. The other is a core concept in order to understand the dynamics of identity and power within the narratives. As prisoners, the American soldiers portrayed the Vietnamese captors as inferior, reinforcing their own sense of identity and superiority. Analyzing these narratives through a postcolonial lens, the ways in which the Vietnam War shaped the American perceptions of the Vietnamese exotic and inferior other will be explored. Chapter one clarifies narrative construction within the context of war imprisonment, providing a subtle understanding of the ways in which they struggle with otherness in warzone. Within the host country, Vietnam, another cultural contest was set to establish the self and the other. Norms of cultural understanding such as traditions, religion, food, and clothing, will be discussed, as they are the basis of the captives’ ideological alienation. It explains how these norms are just symbols used to reinforce that ideological divide.

One might wonder why food, clothing, and norms of cultural understanding are addressed in the part on ‘othering’ rather than in the part that deals with alienation, since these norms contribute the experience of alienation. In this context, they are framed as elements of ideological rather than cultural alienation. The belief in American superiority creates a mental barrier that prevents any attempt to understand or sympathize with the Vietnamese. In the first chapter, food, clothing, and other markers of cultural identity are discussed because they were portrayed as inferior solely due to their association with the ‘other,’ not as sources of culture shock resulting from moving between cultural contexts. That dimension, cultural alienation, will be explored in the first chapter of the fourth part.

Chapter two explains how the Vietnamese women are portrayed as inferior to their American counterparts through the narratives. They were also victims of their society, and it is the mission of the Americans to liberate them from the shackles of ‘barbarism.’ Their portrayal as sexual objects who betrayed the war cause serves to highlight the contrast with American women, who embody virtue through love and loyalty to their country while enjoying freedom at home.

The American soldiers considered themselves as superior to Vietnamese who were portrayed as inferior and exotic other. In order to understand the ‘other’, a reference is drawn to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (2003) that refers to the representation of the East, particularly Asia, in a way that reinforces Western superiority and exoticizes the non-western cultures. Writing about their experiences through the lens of Orientalism helps to understand the power dynamics and the reinforced stereotypes about the East. In both chapters, *Orientalism* analyzes how the American soldiers constructed their own identities in opposition to the other. It also helps to understand the notions of identity, power and the representation in the war context. As a postcolonial concept, Orientalism highlights the ongoing legacy of colonialism in crafting the attitudes, perceptions, and power dynamics in the world today.

Chapter One: The Heroic Self Versus the Exotic Other

The contact within the land of captivity set the ground to the clash that existed between the Oriental and the Western world from the very beginning of Western voyages to the Orient. The clash of these two civilizations was reinforced through different encounters in history to establish the American mindset. The indigenous people are always portrayed as the ‘other’ by the Americans in different occasions. This tradition is not new; rather, it is the by-product and accumulation of many interactions between the self and the other not only in war contexts, but in different historical encounters. The baggage shared between the United States of America and the Orient through the Wars of Barbary pushed the Americans to underscore their superiority reflected by the inferiority of the Orientals. In order to study the black image of the ‘other’ in the POWs narratives, a reference to Barbary Captivity Narratives is necessary. Both narratives, despite the different settings and circumstances, belong to the same genre.

Within Barbary captivity narratives, Islam is the most distinctive feature that was associated with the Oriental countries. Edward Said claims that “untruth” and “falsehood” about Islam and the Muslim World are consistently propagated in the media, in the name of “objectivity”, “liberalism”, “freedom”, “democracy” and “progress”.¹ According to him, the West treated Islam and Muslims within an invented framework filled with passion, defensive prejudice. He thinks that Americans represent Islam as a threat to the democratic order of the Western world.² The primary focus of the Barbary captivity narratives is the captives’ encounters with their Muslim masters, specifically the ways in which they responded to “slavery”, the religion of Islam, and “Algerine” society in general.

From the Barbary captivity narratives to the Vietnam tales of imprisonment, one can notice that the Americans refuse to assimilate with the host country, all the cultural norms within the land of enslavement and imprisonment were seen as inferior. Whereas the Americans refused the identity conversion, the American Indians were asked to give up their Indian ways and become thoroughly Anglicized before they could gain acceptance as church members. A case in point comes with the American former navy fighter pilot Charlie Plumb whose portrait of the Vietnamese strongly resembles many earlier American sketches of “childlike frontier” Indians.³

Some Western writers such as William Shakespeare and Joseph Conrad out of many tended to pass some connoted ideas in their works: *The Tempest* (1611) and *Heart of Darkness* (1899). Respectively, in their works, these Western writers described the ‘other’ as barbaric, uncivilized and sometimes even sub-human. It can be interpreted as either to justifying their colonial attempts, showcasing the cultural and racial differences or to defend the colonized people against colonial rule. It remains debatable for literary interpretation as inconsistent by nature. It is no surprise, therefore, that the rhetoric of both tales of captivity and imprisonment were built on the contrast between the modern traditional government that America sought to establish and the tradition of ‘awful anarchy in Vietnam’.

The prisoners’ accounts link their sufferings as Christians to the suffering of Jesus Christ; they also express repeated faith in God to save them from their ordeal. A case in point comes with Charlie Plumb who declares: “The North Vietnamese apparently wanted to make us feel that this improved treatment was representative. They felt they could make us forget

all our suffering, but we had better memories than their peasants.”⁴Through their tales of imprisonment, the POWs drew a kind of comparison between their Christian teachings and the harsh treatment they suffered in their imprisonment. In the Bible, the prison is the potential means for reforming criminals so they could be returned to society as upright citizens. The POWs regard their captors as tyrants for imprisoning them in such hard conditions. The notion of suffering is repeated throughout the narratives as a reference to Jesus Christ sufferings. The humanity of the captives and the inhumanity of the masters are put in contrast.

As citizens of an advanced and progressive society, the POWs felt the Vietnamese were culturally retarded. This attitude is shared by the POWs such as McGeorge Bundy who responded to Curtis LeMay’s famous remark, “We should bomb them into the Stone Age,” with “Maybe they’re already there.”⁵ This corresponds to Bhabha’s elaboration on the “fixed and static construction of the Other as the subject of colonial discourse.” It is an attempt to dehistoricise the natives and present them as frozen in time and to show the difficulty to passively influence them with the ideals of the civilizing mission.⁶ According to Charlie Plumb, their art was wretched; he found that nearly all Vietnamese music was a strain on his nerves, reminding him of a basement full of grade school horn-blowers trying to imitate the cry of a panther.⁷ Their paintings “were mostly in watercolour, charcoal, or red brick, and they were a far cry from the artistic achievements in China or Japan. They resembled exhibits of grade school children.”⁸ This portrait of the Vietnamese strongly resembles many earlier American sketches of childlike frontier Indians, pre-Civil War slaves, South Sea islanders, or Filipino plantation workers:

The Vietnamese seem more content than Americans, often smiling and laughing at work and play. Frequently they were childishly giddy and irresponsible. They also carried strains of unpredictable sadism. They were excitable. They were stoic about pain although generally not sentimental, they mourned the death of Ho Chi Minh. They lied and stole from each other but rarely came to fistfights. They were vain and ostentatious, but they were afraid.⁹

The comparison drawn by Plumb reminds us of the captivity narratives' comparison of their Muslim captors to the American Indians. The description of the native Indians shifted to conceptual images associated with indigenous Americans to describe the Africans. Just as the American Indians were described as demons, the North Africans were also seen with the same racist views. The Vietnamese are portrayed as computerized robots doing what they were programmed to do, "no pity, no compassion, no emotion at all; in fact, there was nothing in them to indicate they were dealing with human beings,"¹⁰ declared Larry Chesley. The Barbary captivity narratives and their Indians counterparts influenced each other for the connection they establish between the black slave writer in America and the white captive narrator in Africa. Thus, they can be viewed both as two facets of a single story of captors and captives. Paul Baepler questions the adaptability of the Barbary captivity narrative, its evolution, and its rise in popularity just as the country began to define itself.¹¹

Throughout his book, *The Pueblo* (1970), Daniel V. Gallery used the word 'gooks' in referring to the North Koreans. The same word was used in referring to the Vietnamese, as he declares that this word means precisely an uncivilized Asiatic Communist. He also declares that: "I see no reason for anyone who doesn't fit this definition to object to the way I use

it.”¹²The Vietnamese were often blamed because of their poverty and the cultural differences. According to the POWs, the ‘uncivilized’ Vietnamese ‘gook’ seemed stuck at a stage of cultural development which Americans had supposedly passed through generations before.¹³The expressions such as ‘gooks’, ‘uncivilized’ reminds us of Barbary captivity narratives where words like ‘monsters’, ‘savages’, ‘cannibals’, and ‘torturers’ typify the descriptions the captives give to the Muslim ‘Algerines’ they encountered. Joshua Paddock confesses that his reading of travel literature had done little to prepare him for the first contact with Muslim Africans. He comments: “Their figure, and ferocious look, to say nothing of their behavior, were a savage, and even exceeded in savageness, anything that ever have read in narratives of voyages before.”¹⁴

In order to justify colonialism in general, and the American interference in Vietnam in particular, the American prisoners painted such a black image of the ‘other’ who needs to be civilized. Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, grew out of Europeans’ belief in “two complementary and inseparable truths. That they have the divine right, and that the natives are sub-human.”¹⁵The civilizing mission within Vietnam reminds us of the American Indians who were exterminated because they were “far from accepting and joining in Indian customs, the English demanded their total extirpation.”¹⁶

According to Craig Howes, the Americans heading into Vietnam could thus be bringing with them not only that tradition of violent racial hatred which stretches back to colonial Indian hating, but also a well-intentioned, humane, but equally dismissive racial condescension. Between them, these twin impulses cover the range of racial attitudes that

Edward Said has organized under the term Orientalism.¹⁷ Thus, for the mature, civilized, and modern American POWs, their captors were physically and psychologically like children, tiny, petty, immature, culturally like savages, uncivilized, inhuman, sadistic, primitives, underdeveloped and anachronistic.¹⁸ They were, in short nonentities, even in their own country, or as jungle POW Frank Anton put it, “Sure, we called them slopes, dinks, and gooks. But those were simply slang words. It was strange to think of the Vietnamese as foreigners, because they were in their own country, but to us that’s exactly what they were—foreigners.”¹⁹ Though the Vietnamese were not foreigners because they were in their country, they were seen as if they were because of their ‘exotic’ and ‘weird’ traditions, and being different from the Americans who consider themselves as the perfect idols the rest of the world has to follow.

Even the Vietnamese physical appearance was not ignored by the POWs. For instance, Red McDaniel who is six foot three inches, about 160 pounds, with red hair, fair-skinned and round-eyed, described “the average North Vietnamese” as “about five feet two inches tall, with black hair, yellow-skinned, slant-eyed.”²⁰ These immature bodies, according to the POWs, assume childlike minds. A case in point comes with Charlie Plumb who described Vietnamese people as “frequently seemed childish and immature.”²¹ According to him, the guards teased animals, threw rocks, and beat birds’ nests with sticks. Vietnamese anger resembled infants’ tantrums, for “try as they would, these peasants were so small that they were unable to express their fury effectively.”²²

The POW argued that the only thing consistent about the Vietnamese is their inconsistency. Charlie Plumb claimed that the “Vietnamese don’t understand us, and we don’t understand them. That’s part of the whole problem.”²³ The reason POWs gave most often for this gap was a historical one. The POWs rejected the fact that they were imprisoned by inferior, non-white Vietnamese so, the skin colour is another sign of the Vietnamese inferiority in comparison to them as white and civilized Westerners. As he looked at the “little brown guy” guarding him, Robinson Risner was amazed that “he could lock me in, put me in stocks, and seemingly could decide if I should live or die. I was no longer a proud American from a rich and powerful country. I was nothing[...] at their disposal.”²⁴ Even *The New York Times* reported that many POWs had been outraged at being captured by a backward, Communist country they considered socially, militarily and morally inferior; they habitually referred to their captors as ‘sleazy gooks,’ and worse.²⁵ Some POWs concluded that living conditions were horrible because personal hygiene was not important to the Vietnamese. Or as Charlie Plumb claimed, “The V seldom bathed and saw no reason why we should.”²⁶

In all his novels, Gustave Flaubert associates the Orient with the escapism of sexual fantasy. His own voyages remind us not only of his obsession with the Orient, but also with the association he clearly made between the Orient and the freedom of licentious sex. Within the POWs’ stories, the Vietnamese were described not only as stunted, childlike, and backward but also as effeminate, homosexual, and aberrant as well.²⁷ Orientals were believed to be lascivious because of what were considered inherent physical defects and the influence of the climate. Despite the seemingly contradictory images, these two categories characterized

the rhetoric about the native male as one or the other category was called upon depending on the situation. Mrinalini Sinha calls for the necessity of examining the figures of ‘manly’ Westerner and the ‘effeminate’ in relation to ‘specific practices of ruling’, rather than as products of a universalized or generalized colonial condition.²⁸ It is part of the need of Western center to “present and represent its peripheries and its others continually to itself”²⁹

Civilian Alton Newingham recalls that the POWs “had a saying” about their captors: “Ninety per cent of them are perverts, 5% of them are homosexuals and the rest are no-good bastards.”³⁰ A case in point comes with the story told by a POW called Bud Day who saw that the strikingly handsome Vietnamese officer in a new, well-pressed uniform who was whipping him seemed feverish, as though in the grip of some sadistic insanity. He did not stop until his uniform was soaked through with sweat, and perspiration poured from his face. The next day provided an explanation when Day glanced over at the Vietnamese official, whose “arm was moving vigorously beneath the desk.” Though he did not pay attention at first, “now he could see that his tormentor was massaging his genitals, masturbating!” Day then knew he was in the hands of a pervert, a genuine sadist, one who achieved sexual satisfaction from inflicting pain on others.³¹

The Vietnamese male was also portrayed as effeminate; the POWs expressed their anxieties about their captors’ sexuality. The feet, the voice, the perfume, and the imagined panties add up to the effeminate Vietnamese male. Charlie Plumb observed that the men “puffed effeminately, holding the cigarettes between their thumb and forefinger and extending their ‘pinkie.’”³² Though they seemed to have little use for female flirtation, they often

showed special affection toward their male comrades: “It was common to see two V guards or officers holding hands, walking arm in arm, reaching hands under one another’s clothing, or lying in the undergrowth with their bodies intertwined.”³³ Unlike their homosexual and effeminate captors, the POWs presented themselves as militant heterosexuals whose libidos were reduced because of harsh treatment and near-starvation. The POWs never cross the gender lines and maintained sexual potency as a patriotic duty.³⁴ All that have been said reinforces the ideas of Flaubert who associates Orient and sex. In this regard, Said comments:

Flaubert’s Oriental experiences, exciting or disappointing, is an almost uniform association between the Orient and sex. Why the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies, is something on which one could speculate: it is not the province of my analysis here, alas, despite its frequently noted appearance. Nevertheless one must acknowledge its importance as something eliciting complex responses, sometimes even a frightening self-discovery, in the Orientalists, and Flaubert was an interesting case in point.³⁵

This quotation underpins the ideas of Elijah Shaw who writes that: “the Orient has become a metaphor for sexuality which is encapsulated by the recurrent figure of [...] The inaccessibility of the woman, mirroring the mystery of the Orient itself, requires a process of western unveiling for comprehension.”³⁶ Within the POWs narratives, not only the Vietnamese men were seen as sexually deviants, but even women were given the same image to accentuate the association of the Orient with the freedom of licentious sex. According to Gustave Flaubert cited in Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (2003), “the oriental woman is no more than a machine, she makes no distinction between one man another man.”³⁷ This is clear within

the POWs' narratives which show that the Vietnamese women as fascinated by the American prisoners, and each appeared to have her favourite. Despite the camp rules and the fact that Americans were seen as enemies, these women were seeking for Americans because within their society, they express limited sensuality. According to Edward Said, the Oriental male was considered in isolation from the total community in which he lived. This is especially evident in the writing of travellers and novelists about women who are usually portrayed as the creatures of a male power-fantasy.³⁸In the narratives, the secret meeting between the POWs and the Vietnamese women widespread assumption that they would instantly recognize an American POW's total superiority to their own cold and brutal men. A case in point comes with Dramesi's secret story with a Vietnamese woman:

When I opened the window, she turned and we looked at one another for a short moment. I motioned for her to come close to the bars and she did. As she came close, I lifted the necklace that I wore so that she could see it [. . .] She came closer, bowed her head slightly, and I put it around her neck. Then, without releasing the string, I moved very close to her face and through the bars our lips touched. There was a slight smile as she turned slowly and left, fingering one of the polished seeds with her left hand.³⁹

Historically, the relationship between the "West" and the "Orient" was marked by shifts in the balance of power between the two societies. These shifts, in turn, engendered corresponding shifts within archetypal paradigm of women as a literary invention and later as an object of the western feminist gaze.⁴⁰The Vietnamese woman is portrayed as inferior to her American counterpart. While the American woman is exercising her own freedom, the Vietnamese woman limited herself to the household. Centuries ago, women in America were

confined to traditional gender roles, which forced them to remain in the domestic or private sphere of society. For the elite members of society, the importance of women resided in giving birth to male inheritors to maintain the family line.

Actually, the attitude toward women started to gradually improve in America thanks to The Enlightenment, which was a cultural and intellectual movement in Europe and America that sought to reform and improve society through the advancement of knowledge and education. Throughout the Age of the Enlightenment women found ways to combine the new intellectual movements evolving in the public sphere with their appointed place in the domestic private sphere. If Enlightenment has proclaimed reason in all, then it must also be available to women:

It was this notion that the feminists seized upon so avidly. Mary boldly proclaimed the radical thesis that God had given all mankind the same intellectual potential ,whether ancient or modern, rich or poor, male or female. Circumstances determine the extent to which men and women may exercise their rational faculties, but the faculties are present in all.⁴¹

Whereas the Americans believed in the importance of science and reason in their lives, the Vietnamese have a different interpretation of life circle. According to them, after childbirth, the mother and infant are both cold. As the infant develops, he/she becomes warmer, this warmth peaks in adolescence (teenagers are the hottest) and then the adult begins to cool down, maintaining neutrality (the desired state) through maturity. The body becomes cool again in old age. Foods are recommended according to these life stages, immediately following birth, for example, the mother is given hot foods and treatments (which are shared with the infant through breast milk). Infants and young children, while frequently troubled by

cold illnesses such as diarrhea and stomachache, are naturally warm, with a tendency toward rashes, fevers, and constipation. Adults can acquire hot or cold illnesses that need to be counterbalanced by treatments and diet. The elderly tend to be cold, and frequently require therapeutic warming.⁴²

The Americans emphasized the fact that they got rid of religion in order to build their imagined community; the Vietnamese were known for a sense of the richness and variety of traditional religion. Indeed, Vietnam has a number of major religions, each with a large number of followers. The most significant of which is Buddhism, in addition to other religions with a significant following include Catholicism, Protestantism, Theravada Buddhism, Islam, Hoa Hao, and Cao Dai. Buddhism originated in ancient Nepal, and evolved out of Hinduism. It shares some core beliefs with Hinduism; actions have spiritual repercussions called karma. Buddhists also believe in reincarnation, and that good or bad karma determines the quality of the next life. As far as Catholicism is concerned, it is a controversial history in Vietnam. The first Catholic missionaries came from France, and it is still viewed as the official religion of a colonial power. Last but not least, The Cao Dai religion which was established in Southern Vietnam in 1926, and is based on the belief in God rather than any prophet or Buddha, as its founder. Practitioners of Cao Dai believe that we have now entered an era in which God and mankind will be united in ways not yet imagined, and that all religions will one day be united for the salvation of all living things.⁴³

Mercia Eliade in *The Sacred and the Profane :The Nature of Religion* (1957) claims that the religious man seeks to imitate his gods even when he allows himself to be involved

into actions that verge on madness, depravity, and crime.⁴⁴In particular, the religious man experiences the world as having a sacred centre and seeks to live there. His book describes two fundamentally different modes of experience: the traditional and the modern. The traditional man is open to experiencing the world as sacred. The Modern man, however, is closed to these kinds of experiences because the world is experienced only as profane.⁴⁵Eliade claims that

the perspective changes completely when the sense of the religiousness of the cosmos becomes lost. This is what occurs when, in certain more highly evolved societies, the intellectual elites progressively detach themselves from the patterns of the traditional religion. The periodical sanctification of cosmic time then proves useless and without meaning. The gods are no longer accessible through the cosmic rhythms.⁴⁶

It is clear that the concept of the ‘other’ reflects the inherent sense of superiority. The American psyche was fueled not only by the division between the self and the exotic other, but also between the Christian and non-Christian, emphasising the suffering of Jesus Christ as a figure of righteousness and superiority. As a postcolonial concept, Orientalism reinforces the idea that the East including Vietnam, is exotic, mysterious, and inferior to the West. Dehumanizing the Vietnamese is just a justification for the American intervention and the massacres and atrocities of the war. Understanding the complex dynamics of the dehumanization of the Vietnamese is not easy, and it is further complicated with contrasting identities of being Christian or non-Christian added layers of complexity. The concept of the ‘other’ reflects the stereotypes and prejudices prevalent at home, acknowledging the lasting effects of colonialism. It becomes clear that the tales of imprisonment are not just confined to the battlefield, but extend to broader complexities, such as identity, history and faith.

A-Distinction between the Self and the Other through Foodways

One of the cultural norms that was largely repeated in the narratives is food which was an identity marker that distinguished between the self and the other. The Vietnamese food is portrayed as inferior in quality and quantity to the American one. Their main dish consisted only of rice and manioc. It was the case with Barbary captivity narratives, where the food was seen as inferior as it consisted of some olives, vinegar and coarse bread. As an important social phenomenon, food is part and parcel of culture and the means of creating, affecting and making statements about one's identity. Thus, the Americans constructed their identity in opposition to the Vietnamese by using food as an identity matter.

In order to understand how food, as a cultural norm, contributes to the captives' alienation and their view of the Vietnamese as 'other', reference is made to *Food and Culture* (2012), a book edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. It addresses both core classic and contemporary issues in food studies, and brings food to life as a prominent vehicle for engaging students in a wide range of critical cultural issues that are central not only in food courses but in every course. The book shows how food touches everything important to people and marks social difference and strengthens social relationships. It takes a global look at the social, symbolic, and political-economic role of food, from perspectives of anthropology, history, psychology, philosophy, politics, and sociology. It examines some of the meanings of food and eating across cultures, with particular attention to how men and women define themselves differently through their food ways.

“Tell me what kind of food you eat, and I will tell you what kind of man you are,”⁴⁷The phrase “You are what you eat” is biologically true for what we eat forms the bones and organs in our bodies. Human bones reflect the general health and nutrition of the individual. One of the fundamental interests to archaeologists is the diet or subsistence pattern of the peoples they study. Since seasonal patterns of movement are often associated with subsistence regimes, archaeologists frequently study the overall settlement subsistence pattern. Other key topics of study related to food are the origins of agriculture, the process of plant and animal domestication, and the study of foodways.⁴⁸In this regard, the editors of *Food and Culture* (eds.2012) argue that:

food touches everything [...] It is a central pawn in political strategies of states and households. Food marks social differences, boundaries, bonds, and contradictions. Eating is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family, and community relationships [...] Men and women define themselves differently through their foodways, and [...] women across cultures [...] often speak through food and appetite.⁴⁹

In cross-cultural encounters characterized by mingling and meeting of cultures, food can serve to promote diversity awareness and cross-cultural exchanges. It transmits messages about identities and social relationships, and it develops and transforms over time due to social shifts.⁵⁰Vietnamese were subsisting on local crops; their foodways are sustained by three basic essentials: rice, seafood and vegetables with characteristic foods including products such as squid, shrimp and lobster. Whereas meat and fruits are taken in high quantities in America, they are taken in small quantities in Vietnam. The repulsion of food in Vietnam reminds us

of Foss who recounts the repulsion the captives felt when they were persecuted by the ‘Algerines’:

About sunset they brought us a dish of Oil, Olives, and Vinegar, and some bread, and told us, to eat heartily, while we were on board. For after our arrival at Algiers, we should not be allowed such dainties. Although we were very hungry, we could eat but very little, the situation we were in, and not being used to such diet.⁵¹

Foss says it clearly, that they are not used to this diet. In other words, it is a struggle to digest the food very easily due to the cultural contradiction to their own dietary regime. Cathcart points to the fact that this diet does not procure the energy necessary for the hard labour:

Figure to yourself above a thousand poor wretches, many of them half naked, without hat or shoes [...] add to this that they only received two small loaves of **black bread** of seven ounces each in all the day and a very small portion of horse beans, probably without any oil, as their small allowance is given out the day before and is generally either stolen or made away with [...] they then receive a loaf of the same sort of bread, but weighing twelve ounces which is all they ever receive on Friday.⁵²

Clearly, on many occasions the captives mention the notion of food inferiority within Algiers. The coarse bread, olives, and vinegar, according to Foss, represent the only meal that was served in Barbary. However, the French priest offered them delicious white bread. The distinction between the captives and their masters is based on the type of the bread they eat. The black bread is used for the Algerian masters and the white bread is used to the captives. Food reflects the vertical social and economic distinction between not only the rich and the poor but between the ones who pretend to be civilized and the others who are supposed to be inferior. “Bread does not as such constitute a signifying unit: in order to find these we must

go further and look at its varieties. Each variety of bread is a ‘unit of signification,’”⁵³ Roland Barthes writes.

Like Barbary captivity narratives, rats, mosquitoes, and other vermin swarmed in the Vietnamese cells; intestinal parasites flourished. Brought low by diet injuries, and disease, frequently until delirious and caked in their own excrement, the POWs at these times posed little threat to their captors.⁵⁴ The malnourished Hanoi POWs suffered constantly from dysentery, wracking fevers, respiratory ailments, and chronic skin infections. The jungle camps were worse: a diet of nothing but rice and manioc forced the POWs to eat rats, and many died from sickness related to profound malnutrition. Ejection injuries and abuse during capture left scores of POWs seriously injured, making the Camp Authority’s fondness for the tackling “medical problems only after political problems are resolved.”⁵⁵

While the consumption of wine and pork are fundamental foodstuffs in America, they were not well consumed in Vietnam. Fish and seafood remain the primary animal protein rather than pork. Wine and especially rice wine is used in festivals and wedding ceremonies. Daily meals consist of boiled rice, a bowl of stock with vegetables and a plate of meat, fish or tofu and a plate of vegetables. Limes, chilis, and herbs are always available. The dishes are not arranged on a round tray. No beverages are consumed before or during the meal to ensure enough room to fill up on rice.⁵⁶ Craig Howes contends that:

Though the Camp Authority claimed that the Hanoi POWs were getting better food and medical care than most North Vietnamese, the inevitable small bowls of rice, and the deadly timetable of watery pumpkin soup for half the year and watery soup greens for the other half led to fifty-pound weight drops and gastrointestinal misery for the meat-and-potatoes Americans.⁵⁷

Rice, the staple food in Vietnam that is viewed as inferior by American POWs, is the best cereal crop in terms of food energy. In addition to rice, sea fish that characterizes the Vietnamese table had many health benefits. Beyond subsistence, food is a social and cultural expression of individuals. It serves as a starting point for larger debates and discussions around various issues. Food allows people to better understand their past, cultures, and shared future. It is also used to get people in touch with our deepest desires or to examine political and social relations in society.⁵⁸ Similar to language, symbol or ritual, foodways are a potent method of defining and communicating culture as they break the body's internal and external boundary "and because of the biological imperative to eat daily, food inheres in a unique and intimate way in our collective and individual identities, and functions as a potent social, religious, gender, political, and cultural marker."⁵⁹ Cathcart's quote below indicates to what extent food as Barthes above says is a form of communication about identity, the sense of belonging, and the sense of class:

Here we had nothing allowed us but a small plate of meat and another of rice mumsa or burgul, and a basin of sour milk twice a day, which was hardly sufficient for four of us, with some oil and vinegar now and then and black bread, such as is given to the slaves at the Marine, and in the fruit season some musk and watermelons.⁶⁰

What can be noted is that Cathcart writes that they do not have enough meat and rice to eat. He is sorry that the plate of meat is too small to satisfy their hunger for the whole day. People, indeed, are categorized according to the variety of bread given. Thus, food in Vietnam is an identity matter for separating the captives from their masters. Very often the captivity narratives refer to the fact that their masters' foodways are repulsive. The dietary regime that

they are obliged to eat is repulsive not only in terms of biology but in terms of what it signifies. Eating staple foods peculiar to Vietnam is equivalent to an ingestion of another identity, of alienating the self from its cultural core. This ingestion of the identity of the other causes nausea in terms of biological reaction. The cultural shock that the POWs felt is a result of the necessity to eat the food they do certainly abhor in order to survive.

B-Clothing as an Identity Marker

The way of dressing is another cultural norm that distinguishes the ‘Self’ from the ‘Other’ within Vietnam, as clothing is often linked to one’s identity and status. This correlation is found nearly at the beginning of the captivity narratives. Most of the captives complain about the fact that soon as they are boarded by the Algerian corsairs, they are stripped off their clothes. Stripping off their European or Western clothes is experienced as an attack in the sense of their identity, of who and what they are. It is felt as a cultural shock because these Western clothes are replaced by the other’s garments. This signifies an imposed identity, a way of being stranger to the self. The clothes of the Other are synonymous with an alienation from the self, and from one’s own identity.

Roland Barthes’s *The Fashion System* (1967) is going to be used in order to understand how clothing is inextricably linked to identity. According to Barthes, if popular fashion says that any kind of garment is ideal for certain situation, this idea must be naturalized and accepted as a truth and cannot be discussed. Though it was based on French magazines, Barthes’ study can be seen as a reference to clothing’s sociological and historical significance. It provides a theoretical framework for probing into the meanings that the captive writers in

this research accord to clothing across cultures. Barthes's theory can be applied to study the political life of signs within particular time and place for the fashion system is endowed with ideologies and ideas that are transmitted through clothing. It is the latter he sets to examine; these sign systems do not produce clothing, nor women, but the abstract notion of fashion. In order to understand a certain fashion, it must be done in relation.

In *The Fashion System* (1959), Roland Barthes argues that fashion signs can contain explicit references to the world or implicit references to the ideology of fashion itself. In the first instance, the dominant metaphor is work, the curiously inactive activity of dressing up: "to dress in order to act is, in a certain way, not to act, it is to display the being of doing, without assuming its reality."⁶¹ When it is fashion itself which is signified, it assumes the guise of natural law, imperative and agentless: "what is decided on, imposed, finally appears as necessary [...] For this to take place, it is enough to keep the fashion decision secret; who will make it obligatory that this summer's dresses be made of raw silk"⁶² Thus, Barthes succeeds in revealing how fashion language draws a veil around the fashion object, "a veil of images, of reasons, of meanings; a mediating substance of an aperitive order[...] substituting for the slow time of wear a sovereign time free to destroy itself by an act of annual potlatch."⁶³

As a significant social phenomenon, clothing is part and parcel of culture and the means of creating, affecting and making statements about one's identity. Franz Fanon refers to the centrality of the mode of dress in people's identity and writes that "the way people clothe themselves, together with the traditions of dress and finery that custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive form of a society's uniqueness, that is to say the one that is the

most immediately perceptible.”⁶⁴ Thus, the American prisoners of war realized their need to construct their identity in opposition to the Vietnamese one, because of the way of dressing that distinguished U.S and Vietnam. Obviously, the nakedness of the POWs in the camp is used as a metaphor for primitive people, who let their prisoners wander naked in the camp. Robinson Risner comments: “I recall very, very vividly 10 or 11 POWs lying on a crowded bamboo bed in the jungles of Quangnom screaming and asking god or someone to take their life so the itching would stop.”⁶⁵ At night, these POWs slept 10 and 12 to a bed while the sick and dying vomited and defecated among them by day, they lived barefoot and virtually without clothes in a compound littered with excrement from men too tortured by disease and starvation to clean it up.⁶⁶

The fact of cutting off the captives’ flight suit to make them wear the camp uniforms denotes a midway between civilization and primitivism, according to the Americans. Browsing the narratives, one can notice that all the POWs emphasize this notion in order to show that the imprisonment is a trip from the civilized America to the primitive Vietnam. In other words, it is a trip from light to darkness when the captors used knives or machetes to cut off the captive’s flight suit, as John McGrath writes, “It seemed as though they had never seen a zipper.”⁶⁷ Actually, the notion nakedness refers to their need to be tamed and civilized by the Americans in order to teach them the value of covering their bodies. According to Levine, nakedness:

was to be a state of nature, unschooled, unselfconscious, lacking in shame and propriety, and nothing better signified the primitive than nakedness. Nakedness defined the Western encounter with colonial, and potentially colonial, spaces.⁶⁸

Clothes are central to the way bodies are experienced, presented and understood within culture. Dressing forms a significant, though neglected, element in people's identities and belongings. Julia Twigg writes that clothes are expressions of identity, one of the perennial means whereby we signal to the social world who and what we are; they are part of our repertoire of social technology, a means whereby ideas of identity are grounded in the visual.⁶⁹ Imposing clothes on other categories of people is close in meaning to the imposition of aesthetics, a way of being to the world: "it must never be forgotten that the working-class 'aesthetic' is a dominated 'aesthetic' which is constantly obliged to define itself in terms of the dominant aesthetic."⁷⁰ Thus, by being stripped off their clothing and wearing imposed clothes barely hiding one's nakedness, the prisoners have their identities deconstructed and reconstructed according to a foreign cultural code. This leads to cultural shock because of the resulting distinction from the inner self and other. The way of dressing differs from one culture to another, in a way that the abstract ideas, values, and perceptions of the world reflected in people's behaviour and way of dressing:

Every culture provides a design for thought and action that helps people survive and deal with all the challenges of existence. To endure, a culture must satisfy the basic needs of those who live by its rules, and it must provide an orderly existence for the members of a society. In doing so, a culture must strike a balance between the self-interests of individuals and the needs of society as a whole.⁷¹

While Americans are very careful about their dress, the Vietnamese people do not have sense of elegance, according to the POWs. The clothing system of the natives in comparison to the American one is regarded as a statement of their advancement of

civilization and etiquette. Each occasion acquires a certain sort of garment. The clothing fashion of Americans is contrasted to the sombre and coarse clothes worn by the Vietnamese. The coarseness of their garments reflects their harshness and bad temper. The sombre colours that are associated with the Vietnamese reflect their backwardness, for these colours are associated with the natives who still live in darkness. Unlike the light ones which make life more cheerful, muted and quiet colours as grey and black suggest social retirement, or a withdrawn and side-lined status. The adoption of dull, neutral colours in old age relates to the dullness of life.⁷²

Americans use white colour, which signifies civilization, in addition to other cheerful colours and symbolic motifs. These colours are represented in the American flag. While the white colour signifies purity and innocence, the red one signifies hardness and valour. In addition to the white and red colours, the blue is used as the colour of the Chief, and the placement of the broad band signifies, vigilance, perseverance and justice.⁷³ While the Vietnamese' garments were made by coarse materials, the American ones were made by soft and convenient ones. The material of clothing is socially and culturally significant as it is shown by the quote below:

Different types of textiles were used not only to make clothing but also to make bedding, linens, curtains, ship sails and upholstery. Textiles used during the colonial era were made chiefly from wool and flax. Cotton was used less often for colonial clothing. A material called serge, which was a durable twilled woollen fabric, was commonly used for bed curtains, upholstery and clothing.⁷⁴

Larry Chesley and other POWs were unwillingly to be clothed and fed like their captors, which they viewed as a form of assimilation; they even resisted and refused to learn the language. They wanted to maintain separate status, making no concessions that would even hint of collaboration with the enemy, and forcing their captors to address them in English.⁷⁵ Though unavoidably clothed and fed like their captors, the POWs resisted anything, including language, that could suggest spiritual assimilation. As Richard Drinnon notes that since colonial days, “all white renegades, from Thomas Morton to John Winfrey, were freaks of nature, white savages who had, as John Quincy Adams said of Arbuthnot and Ambrister, disowned ‘their own natures.’”⁷⁶

If the nakedness assigned to the natives indicates their backwardness in terms of evolution, the nakedness of the Westerner as a result of being stripped off one’s clothing is used as a metaphor for their being lowered in terms of social status. The Westerners are reduced to the level of the natives whose clothes they are obliged to wear. It is this wearing of someone else’s identity, of being in someone else’s skin, that causes their feelings of alienation. Clothing is an important marker of identity and class. If the American captives are alienated, it is because they were obliged to disregard their American identities as they are signified by their clothing fashion and to adopt the ‘other’ foreign mode of dressing.

Differences in cultures are thus reduced to value judgements in favour of the home cultures. These value judgements can only be accentuated when they are given under wartime conditions. However, in sorting out these value judgements about the Vietnamese cultural norms and government in the American POWs' narratives, we have to pay attention to individual psychological differences in the stereotypical visions of the captive authors.

Throughout the narratives, one can notice the POWs' tendency to portray Vietnam as synonymous with tyranny. The antagonism of Westerners and non-Westerners in the narratives helps to widen the gap between the West and the Orient, underscoring the superiority of the former over the latter. The reversal of their situation in Vietnam is a reason behind their alienation because the POWs have already assimilated all the prejudices of their countrymen about the Orient in general and Vietnam in particular. The fear they express seems to be inbuilt, Vietnam or any other land of imprisonment is just an occasion that triggers it. This confirms the traditional confrontation between the West and the Orient which resulted in ultimate conflict.

Even the names associated to the Vietnamese Captors reveal a remarkable range of hate, ridicule, and contempt. The senior Hanoi officials were Rabbit, Eagle, and the Cat, and other names cover the entire animal kingdom. Monkey Man, Monk, Dog, Fox, and Bear were the mammals; the birds were Owl, Hawk, Parrot, Goose, and Duckling. The names derived from cartoon characters, deviates, and beasts, in fact, arose from those feelings of technological, cultural, and racial superiority which the POWs drew upon for strength. Most POWs returned the favour, but as they came to believe that America's Vietnam adventure

was a mistake, they also decided that their own racism had led them to give humiliating names to patriots and admirable human beings.

The POWs' disorientation is due to the fact they are imprisoned in an Oriental land that threatens their loyalty to the American ideals of liberty. Most of the time, the Christian captives emphasize the notion of suffering in reference to Jesus Christ suffering. As a rule, the protagonists of those narratives do not renounce the American ideals of liberty and respect the Code of Conduct. Despite the severe articles within the Code of Conduct, the POWs expressed their willingness to die rather than betray their country.

The inhumanity of the Vietnamese captors is mentioned several times by the POWs who defy everything related to their land of imprisonment. They associated the inferiority and savageness of the Vietnamese with Communism which is, according to POWs the reason behind being retarded. Thus, it is their own duty, as Americans, to bring light to this dark land and accomplish their civilizing mission. The American prisoners of war felt obliged not only to protect their own identity through rejecting the Vietnamese cultural norms, but also to push the Vietnamese to give up Communism. The image of Vietnamese people being liberated from the shackles of Communism by the Americans who claimed the holy mission was accentuated to justify their military interference. Indeed, the most outstanding factor of the POWs' alienation and their negative views of Vietnam and the Orient in general are due to the prevailing images at home and their unwillingness to understand and accept the other.

Eating the Vietnamese food is certainly not a physical hardship, but it is psychologically enervating. Comparing the American diet or way of subsistence to the

Vietnamese is often used to speak about the distinction of American and Vietnamese cultures. The contrast between the 'poor' and 'inferior' diet of Vietnam to American is used for talking about the loss of social status. The variety of the type of food served establishes a social and racial boundary difficult to cross. For people coming from what is often called the 'Land of the Free', it is culturally shocking to eat rice and manioc in the imprisonment within Vietnam. A wink to the slaves in America is not absent since the American 'freemen' have found themselves in the same slavery regime that reminded them that they stand as masters over a multitude of non-white men with hardly enough food to subsist on.

The 'inferior' and insufficient food of the 'other' signifies solidarity in servitude. It also signifies the absence of family. All the slaves have male company in the prison, where the prisoners made new acquaintances and supported each other to pass the hard times together. This provides no solace since there is no home, and no home meals to assuage the feelings of dietary alienation or the cultural shock of eating food that reminds them of their captivity in other homelands.

Clothing plays a significant role in expressing one's identity and class. The American prisoners were alienated because they have to abandon their American identity through adopting a foreign mode of dressing. This is equivalent to what is called 'wearing prisoners' garments' that is conversion to the way of life imposed on them by force. Wearing the prisoners' clothes is for the most of them strikingly similar to the adoption of another identity. The second factor of establishing the self and the other is the fact that the clothing within the prison does not distinguish one POW from another despite their different ranks, so wearing

prisoners' clothes extends the fact that they are under the mastership of the Communist leaders. The Camp Authority's rule over the captives sounds as a reversal of roles in the American patriarchal context and domestic system. The third factor is the reversal of the system of class. The captives felt converted in terms of class and social status; they were obliged to go barefooted and wear the coarse clothing of another culture.

The reversal of their fates from military aviators to prisoners in an 'inferior' land of imprisonment resulted in an ultimate alienation. Though the POWs know that the prisons all over the world impose special garments to the prisoners, they refused the embarrassment of Americans in the inferior Oriental land. Their cultural shock was not because of cultural norms, but because of the biased ideas prevalent in their own cultures. As I already said, the crossing culture engenders stereotypes and reduces the culture of the other to value judgments in favour of the home culture.

Chapter Two: The Image of the Vietnamese Women Versus their American Counterparts in the American Narratives

Through the American narratives, Vietnamese women's main role in society during the Vietnam War rested in their ability to perform domestic roles such as bearing children and being good wives to their husbands. They were expected to be obedient to their husbands and take care of the household as marriage was important in the eyes of Vietnamese society. In order to understand the Vietnamese women's image presented through the American narratives, reference is made to Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Said argues that: "The Orient since antiquity has been a place of exotic romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences..."⁷⁷ The Western writers' fascination with the Orient exercised a great influence on their works, demonstrating their curiosity and desire for more details about the exotic 'other.'

Fearing the community's judgement, women rarely left their husbands even if they were abusive towards them. Similarly, women's virginity and her body's worth were determined by the value it had to men, specifically their future husbands. In case of rape, the assault was not considered degrading to the woman personally, but instead devalued her worth as a potential wife and child-bearer.⁷⁸ After the war, female veterans challenged their own culture's gender norms through adopting children, having children out of the wedlock, and having more than the two-child limit that the government enforced. They argued that they had earned the right to be mothers after their sacrifices. To gain personal goals, the female veterans

were able to manipulate the sanctity of motherhood in order to gain what they considered the ultimate achievement of having children.⁷⁹

The American military continued to underestimate women's abilities to assist the Viet Cong and their importance to the war despite the fact that the uprisings that took place in the 1940s and 1960s during the French and American Wars relied on women at the market to spread the word and organize rebellions. The market was a perfect place to exchange information, women used this network to disseminate propaganda and information for the Viet Cong.⁸⁰ Relying on the experience of the older generation of women who fought against the French for tactics and skills to use against the Americans, was an advantage of the women involved in the American War.⁸¹ Another advantage taken by the Vietnamese women in order to support North Vietnam and became an invaluable asset to their comrades, was the American men's perpetuation of gender roles and the perceived weakness of Vietnamese men and women. In their dealing with Vietnamese women's question, the Americans resorted to what Homi Bhabha calls in the *Location of Culture* their ambivalence towards women's rights. "This ambivalence is caused by the enunciator's location within an apparatus of power, and she/he negotiates a position from which to speak."⁸²

The image of Vietnamese women as weak and submissive reminds us of the early captivity narratives centuries before the Vietnam War. Through *Slaves in Algiers or a Struggle for Freedom* (1794), Susanna Rowson Portrays the situation of the indigenous female characters, bought and sold as mere commodities. The characterization of indigenous women is also made to reveal the difference between them and the American women. Apart

from the two main Oriental female characters who befriend the American captives; the rest of the indigenous women seem to be represented as superficial and persecuted by their husbands.

In her play, Rowson portrays Algiers as inferior to the American civilized values. This is often referred to in Western literature as the Orient-West dichotomy. She put emphasis on the American female characters and their outstanding role in the society by granting them the main role in liberating the prisoners. The sexist ideology used by Rowson viewed women as mere nurturers for men and children. When asked about the origins of her mother, Fetnah replied: “She came from that land, where virtue in either sex is the only mark of superiority- She was an American.”⁸³ Rowson’s use of these conversations was mainly to showcase the American superiority over the Orient. Fetnah’s sense of strength, intelligence and audacity is depicted in the play as being entirely dependent on her friendship with Rebecca, who triggered her intellectual awakening; Rowson highlights this so-called lack of intelligence among these women and emphasizes their impressionable nature.

The character Zoriana, the *Dey*’s daughter, is represented as having the same anomalous state of mind as Fetnah. In the third scene of the first act of the play, Zoriana, reassured the American character, Olivia: “Be not alarmed sweet Olivia, I am a Christian in my heart, and I love a Christian slave to whom I have conveyed money and jewels, sufficient to ransom himself and several others.”⁸⁴ Zoriana’s intellectual awakening also seems to have followed the same way as Fetnah’s. Zoriana’s involvement in Christianity, Western culture and a relationship with an American slave denotes the existence of such characteristics within

the personality and cultural identity of the Oriental woman. These features can be altered with the presence of external influence. Besides, Rowson recognizes the intelligence of an Oriental woman as the result of the so-called influential grandeur of the Western characters. For Rowson, Fetnah and Zoriana's lack of identification with their culture is their main driving strength behind their uprightness in addition to their brave journey within the play.

Vietnamese female characters are also represented as exploited women through a stereotype of the subjugated and mentally inferior Oriental woman. They are depicted with their futile remarks, superficial interests as well as their lack of ambition and bravery. Orientalism as a discourse which posits the Occident as the powerful part as opposed to the weak Orient which needs the Occident. This is also developed by Gayathri Spivak in her *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Her sentence "white men are saving the brown women from brown men"⁸⁵ which she has made on the British banning the practice of suttee could have been made about any other colonized country. This shows that "White women[...] have not produced an alternative understanding."⁸⁵ Instead, they produced an accomplice Orientalist discourse themselves and were, as true dutiful daughters of the empire, keen on giving 'silenced' 'Other' women a voice.⁸⁶

According to Royal Tyler, American women played a new role after the American Revolution; they gained enormous political importance.⁸⁷ In order to persuade women to support political movements, men discussed politics and government with their wives and daughters for the first time on a national scale. Interested and involved in the public sphere, women dared to take a more active role in the revolution as it was the case with Abigail

Adams. The latter advocated for women's rights and urged her husband, John Adams, to 'remember the ladies' during the American Revolution. American women are given strength by their belief in liberty as persons rather than sexual objects. They believe that liberty should extend to "liberty in love."⁸⁸

Whereas the American women were exercising their liberty at homes, the Vietnamese ones were seen as inferior and unattractive. Names such as moms, whores, dogs, baby dolls, and bitches were given to the Vietnamese women to show their inferiority as Orientals underscored by the superiority of Westerners. They even confessed that they found nearly all these women most unattractive. The only female who attracted Everett Alvarez and other POWs is said to be French because of her "strikingly beautiful features, long, light brown hair, and tall, willowy figure."⁸⁹ Because of her beauty, the POWs decided that she has French blood and called her Frenchie. For them, such a beauty could not be a Vietnamese because she fits the Western standards of beauty.

The native women, in their eyes, thus can never really be fully Westerners and will always be thought of as vassals. Frenchie became immortal on the day she disrobed and bathed without knowing she could be seen from one of the cells. Everett Alvarez declares that though only one POW saw her, "not a man forgot that day when Frenchie bared her elongated body beneath the azure summer sky." He declares that they "imagined her standing like a supple Venus, soaping her slender limbs and stretching her elegant neck skywards."⁹⁰

There were other tales of detention in the land of Saddam Hussein; the account of Jessica Lynch's imprisonment during an ambush in Nasiriyah reminds us of Susana Rowson's

Slaves in Algiers (1794). These stories encouraged early Americans to see themselves not just as members of a community under God, as Rowson's paly and Rowlandson's narrative emphasize, but as part of a nation finding its way in a complex international scene. The narrative surrounding Jessica Lynch's nine-day detention in Saddam Hussein's country aligns with the overtly political themes of the Barbary captive tradition. Seeing women like Lynch as the personification of republican parenting values, the philosophy that filtered the unique but restrained feminism of Rowson and other early national women, might not be overly dramatic. While the Vietnamese women are said to betray their country by consorting with American soldiers, Jessica Lynch and her comrades, who express female virtue as it was envisioned by patriotic women of the period, a combination of love for the country ,devotion to family ,and other traditional female qualities.⁹¹

After her rescue from an Iraqi hospital, Lynch became a symbolic figure whose rescue was not met with resistance from Iraqis as portrayed in the media, as she later revealed that her injuries were from a vehicle crash and her resistance was limited by a jammed rifle. Influenced by Hollywood producers, her story has been used as a symbol of American patriotism and heroism.⁹²From an army clerk into a symbol of heroism ,Lynch offered reassurance that the preemptive war was justified and necessary, rather than an act of hasty military aggression. However, Lynch herself denied firing her weapon during her capture and being mistreated abused at the hospital, refusing the social script that depicted her as a helpless girl saved from Iraqi brutality.⁹³Thus, Orientalists, according to Edward Said, do not innocently describe the Orient but also create and maintain the Orient and create texts

influenced by the ideology of imperialism. Orientalism is also “a will to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate even to incorporate the other.”⁹⁴

The story of Jessica Lynch became popular because it reflected themes that entertainment media have made recognizable in stories about U.S. soldiers in Vietnam. Lynch does not mention any assault in her memoir that do not include any complaints about that kind of violation. Her story, replete with fears of maintaining bodily integrity against a non-European “other,” justified the war in Iraq as a civilizing mission and reaffirmed the assertion of American aggression by highlighting a woman who represented bravery and courage as the main justification for the conflict.

In the same trend, Maria Martin’s *History of Captivity and Sufferings* (1807) is similar to Rowson’s *Slaves in Algiers*. She tells us that in the company of her husband she was sailing off from Madeira to Cadiz in 1800 to render a visit to an aged uncle of hers when their ship a sloop called *Triumph* was chased by corsairs from Algiers. She argued that she was prey to her perverse master whom she successfully resisted until her redemption.⁹⁵ This of course made her narrative espouse the contours of the gothic literature prevalent in her time. All of Martin’s narrative turns around her resistance to the “bashaw’s” attempt to make her a concubine. She described how she was loaded with chains because of her decision not to sell out her virtue in exchange of an easy life in an oriental harem. In her turn, Mary Rowlandson’s narrative came out as a reaction to the disseminating hearsays about sexual violations experienced during her captivity at the hand of Indians. At some point in her narrative, Rowlandson uncovers the cruel nature of her

captives who “feared neither God, nor man, nor the devil,”⁹⁶ whose savagery could scarcely amount to abuse her chastity in the presence of God. She also has the intention to record her spiritual experiences, as well as provide a guide for those who are eager to know her religious practices during captivity.

Actually, the portrayal of Vietnamese women in American narratives served as a counter-image to their American counterparts. The commonplace in American narrative, found in memoirs, movies, and diaries, frequently overlooks the roles played by women, except as bar-girls and prostitutes. One example of Vietnamese women being portrayed as sexual and deviant can be found in Stanley Kubrick’s film, *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). There is a famous scene in which two American soldiers, Joker and Rafterman, are approached by a young Vietnamese prostitute who tries to persuade them to pay for her services. Through repeating the phrases, “me so horny” and “me love you long time,” this lady offers the male audience a familiar stereotype while adding a touch of humor as the men in the scene negotiate for a lower price.⁹⁷

Since the movie’s release in 1987, this scene and this prostitute’s exchange have turned into a catchphrase that speaks to Asian ladies and their reason of serving in male fantasies. Maybe this story is so well known since so numerous works on Vietnam have been composed by men or distributed in areas overwhelmed by men, such as the mass media and news coverage, especially war journalism.⁹⁸ Whether a woman was a dangerous threat, something to be protected, or something to be dominated were decisions men made based on their view of how women acted according to their stereotypes of women. Demonizing women who did

not fit the mold was a common practice by the American military who did this effectively to Vietnamese women, especially bar-girls and prostitutes, but not limited to those roles. The “Vagina Dentata” and “Incurable Venereal Disease” myths serve as examples of the way in which soldier gossip played a role in demonizing women. These myths were stories that were told by American soldiers about the terrifying ways in which Vietnamese women attempted to maim, kill, or in some way injure American soldiers.⁹⁹

According to the American soldiers, this action was done intentionally by women who would then seduce American men in an attempt to maim or kill them through intercourse. The “Vagina Dentata” myth tells of how Vietnamese women, usually prostitutes, would insert sharp objects such as razor blades or broken Coca Cola bottles into their vagina before having intercourse with an American soldier. The “Incurable Venereal Disease” was another myth which tells that Vietnamese women seeking for biological warfare, would infect the Americans with incurable venereal diseases. Thus, they were sent to a hidden island where all infected men were hidden away by the American government.¹⁰⁰

In an exploration of this myth, Monte Gulzow and Carol Mitchell interviewed one woman and fifty-two men, “most of whom were ex-servicemen and thirty-five of whom had served in Vietnam.”¹⁰¹ From their interviews, it is evident that these legends likely originated from the military’s efforts to prevent Americans from fraternizing with Vietnamese women. However, this effort would prove to be a failure, the rumors serve as a proof of the caution and mistrust towards Vietnamese women.

In the case of the “Vagina Dentata” legend, the penis is the ultimate symbol of masculinity, and any damage it serves to emasculate a man.¹⁰² These myths are a direct threat to men’s masculinity, allowing men to see Vietnamese women as a literal threat to their masculinity. However, they were not seen as a legitimate threat to the American military operations in Vietnam. This idea allowed for women to become the enemy, which the military plays on and perpetuates through training and the use of gendered terms to humiliate men. These gendered terms can not only humiliate American men but also enable Americans to dehumanize the Vietnamese by portraying them as feminine. The fear of emasculation has been most effectively exploited by the military, who uses gendered vocabulary such as ‘pussy’, ‘sissy’, and ‘ladies’ during men’s training.¹⁰³

Booklets and literature produced by the military during the war show the American gender norms and stereotypes at work. The American perceptions of Vietnamese gender norms as well as American gender culture were present in these publications. *A Pocket Guide to Vietnam* was a booklet written for American soldiers in order to prepare them for living in Vietnam.¹⁰⁴ It includes brief information on Vietnam’s people, history, government and customs. This guide discusses women and their place in household, emphasizing the fact that women were bound to men, yet they claim that women had tremendous influence over their husbands’ opinions and actions.¹⁰⁵ These comments demonstrate the Americans’ inability to acknowledge women’s power outside of the home, and that their roles may not have fit into idealized norms.

To better understand the Vietnamese society, the booklet's cover features a young woman wearing a traditional ao dai, which suggests how Americans viewed Vietnam as a country.¹⁰⁶ Through the woman wearing such a conservative outfit associated with beauty and femininity on the cover, it is clear that Americans felt that this was an accurate representation of Vietnam as a whole: peaceful, beautiful, and weak. Edward Said argued that Orientalism is a discourse informed by notions that the West is strong, upright, and rational, while the Orient is weak, passive and irrational.¹⁰⁷

To gain a clear understanding of the social, political, and economic status of Vietnam, as well as the national security, *The Area Handbook for South Vietnam* was created by the U.S. military. The handbook notes that "some women actually join the fighting," but their roles in the conflict are not specified, and do not represent any threat to the American military. It is argued that the only motivation listed for Vietnamese women who join the war is that of following their husbands into battle.¹⁰⁸ Almost a million women fought in Northern guerrilla and militia forces during the war, with 40% of the guerrilla forces in the South being made up by women.¹⁰⁹ Americans could not understand the notion that women would seek out combat unless in service to their husbands.

American men continued to underestimate women and their positions, despite the number of women in roles that directly contradicted American gender norms and expectations. To urge the soldiers to understand the cultural differences between the American and Vietnamese people, another handbook called *Navy* was disseminated by the U.S. Navy providing the interaction rules in a sexual or intimate manner with Vietnamese

women and what not to do in public such as holding hands. American military knew that Vietnamese women were capable of being aggressive enemies through the bounties that were placed on dangerous women who eluded capture during the war. However, no effort was put into making soldiers aware that women were a threat as fighters, spies, or messengers. Navy does not provide any information about women's roles in combat situations, only how to correctly date a Vietnamese woman.¹¹⁰ The fact of underestimating women comes from American men's idealized sense of feminine weakness and the gentle innocence of women found in American gender culture.

A number of scholars have written on the subject of gender and women in Vietnam, including periods before, during, and directly after the war. In particular, Susan Jeffords, Lady Borton, Heather Stur, Sandra Taylor, and Karen Turner offer unique experiences into the gender dynamics of the period, American and Vietnamese cultures, and Vietnamese women's roles and experiences amid the war. Women played into and contradicted gender norms, which allowed them to be manipulated by the North Vietnamese government as well as underestimated by the American military.

Women confirmed gender norms as well as contradicted them through their diverse combat and support roles. Although American and Vietnamese cultures shared similarities during the Vietnam War, such as a patriarchal society placing women in a domestic role, these two cultures also had unique aspects. Women were viewed as weak and frail, Vietnamese women were able to take advantage of American men's perceptions to gain the upper hand, not only in combat situations, but also when engaged in espionage. American gender culture

during this time was a continuation of the Cold War gender culture which emphasized male masculinity and female domesticity and chastity. Despite the Vietnamese culture emphasis on patriarchal attitudes such as female submission and other characteristics of Confucianism, it encouraged women's participation in the war.¹¹¹

Promoting equality between men and women, and using women's desire for that freedom, along with other motivations, was a way of women exploitation during the war by the North Vietnamese government. With American and Vietnamese men's views on women as submissive or weak, the North Vietnamese government was able to use women to further their agenda by surprising American expectations and shaming Vietnamese men into working harder. These complexities and inconsistencies in the gender expectations of two cultures, American and Vietnamese, allowed Vietnamese women to be ignored and underestimated by the American military and exploited by the North Vietnamese government.

The indigenous woman's body, however, is doubly prejudiced against: as women and as colonized. Her body is degraded and humiliated through colonial prostitution or sex industry but also in many cases through sexual abuse which was used as a tactic to humiliate the whole society because of the symbolism of the female body and of her honour for the heavily religious and patriarchal society. The violent physical appropriation here signifies the seizure of the land. The exploitation of the Vietnamese women in the sex economy was loaded with symbolism in that these women, though a minority, did not flee from the colonial gaze. This exploitation could be read as a symbolic revenge on the Vietnamese society as a whole. Although American captivity narratives frequently portrayed the Vietnamese women as

inferior, such representations overlook the role and agency of these women. In particular, the next section will explore the important and diverse roles played by Vietnamese women during the war, highlighting their involvement as fighters, leaders, medical personnel, and symbols of national resistance, which stands in contrast to their marginalization in American narratives.

Vietnamese Women's Role in the War

While some Vietnamese women were bar-girls and prostitutes, many women were dynamic combatants in the war, taking an interest in military units as well as taking up arms in a civilian capacity. They also acted as spies, scouts, calculated back work force, and selection representatives. In other words, they took on a variety of roles. Stories of the tradition of warrior women date back to 40 CE with the Trung sisters and continued throughout Vietnam's history with other exceptional warrior women such as Phung Thi Chinh and Lady Trieu Thi Trinh.¹¹² Thus, Vietnamese women serving in support and combat roles during times of war was nothing new since they were raised on stories of these warriors and their heroics. It is not surprising that women were eager to participate in battle in order to live up to their ancestors who fought before them. The participation in both the French and American Wars was a kind of liberation for women. Ho Chi Minh, leader of the Communist Party in North Vietnam, argued for women's liberation during the French occupation, and continued to do so during the American War.

Though women were granted 'equality' and encouraged to join the war, some Vietnamese men still retained their traditional gender role and expectations of women as

gentle nurturers and supporters of male soldiers. Actually, the 1946 North Vietnamese Constitution included economic and political equality for women and women's suffrage.¹¹³ In one woman's official curriculum vitae, party officials commented that she was "brave and diligent, but hot tempered and quarrelsome", and that "although she's performed several missions, she still doesn't understand her part very well."¹¹⁴ Women success as soldiers and leaders was seen as somewhat disobedient and antagonistic. They are even absent from military reports, though thousands of women were in the field by 1966. With women participation, the war was getting done more efficiently and in a more organized manner than before.¹¹⁵ They provided valuable assistance to the war effort, and men were highly influenced by women's participation.

Enlisting women was shaming and motivating men at the same time into being more committed to the war. Praising women's achievements was challenging the traditional norms where men are considered dominant and are the head of their families. These men felt ashamed and disliked the fact that women were in equal or leadership roles. Thus, they were motivated to work harder to retain their dominant positions to support the cause to the best of their abilities. Almost a million women participated in the Vietnam war, they not only worked in North Vietnam's guerrilla and militia forces but they also operated in the South to support the North as propagandists and spies. Many women of the North joined the Volunteer Youth Corps, an organization made up of young men and women volunteers who were primarily responsible for work on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, although they were given other duties.¹¹⁶

The majority of women who joined the army were between ages of seventeen and twenty, but some girls were as young as thirteen years old. These youth maintained over one thousand miles of road, built six airstrips, shot down dozens of planes, and transported tens of thousands of weapons and food. They also worked along the trail, the main route for moving supplies and soldiers between North and South Vietnam. They operated anti-craft guns, repaired damage caused by American bombs, and guided men and supplies through the network of roads that made up the Trail. The idea that war was men's work was challenged by women who were given dangerous tasks in the field.¹¹⁷

Women proved efficient at shooting down enemy aircraft and planted mines and booby traps to injure or kill Americans. These women were openly praised by officials for their marksmanship abilities as well as their fierce determination in battle.¹¹⁸ The North Vietnamese government created conflicts in regards to gender roles through publicly acknowledging and commending women participants. They not only manipulated the women who continued to work for the praise of their leaders, but also the men who became more determined than women in order to maintain their dominant roles.

Women also proved invaluable to the Viet Cong in the realm of logistics and the transportation of goods and troops. While the Ho Chi Minh Trail was used to transport large groups of soldiers and supplies, women took part in transporting troops and arms on a more localized level as well. Women also provided and smuggled food to individual soldiers and units. In other words, even those women who were not involved in combat played a crucial role by using their skills and abilities to feed, care for, and at times, hide Viet Cong

soldiers.¹¹⁹ During the war, women played a dual role of mother and warrior, expressing contradiction of maintaining motherhood and wielding a weapon in a battle. While nurturing, they were also capable of killing and handling deadly weapons with competence. Women participation in the war allowed the North Vietnamese government to shame and manipulate Vietnamese men into working harder than their female comrades.

The North Vietnamese government used women and their femininity to further their agenda. To infiltrate American and South Vietnamese military bases, women were used as spies to acquire information on troop movements, officers' maps, and supplies. Since women were underestimated due to their sex, espionage, passing along messages, along with smuggling out information to the Viet Cong became their main role. Most of the time, they did not smuggle physical information, rather they memorized the information to be passed on to their leaders. Because of their gendered views, the U.S. military believe that women were not capable of such complex acts of espionage.¹²⁰ Even bar girls and prostitutes were encouraged to spy on the men who paid for their services. They used flirtation, seduction as tactics to gain information from Americans and their South Vietnamese allies. This is an example of how women conformed to gender norms and expectations in order to gain the upper hand.¹²¹

Madame Nguyen Thi Binh was chosen by Ho Chi Minh to head the NLF delegation as Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1968-1973. She was the only woman to sign the Paris treaty in 1973, placing her as an equal to the American Secretary of State and Commander in Chiefs from Laos and Cambodia.¹²² Through wearing a traditional ao dai, she used clothing and

femininity to gain attention and world sympathy for the NLF's Communist cause by playing upon American sensibilities and gender expectations.¹²³ Ho Chi Minh purposefully chose Mme. Binh as his representative because he knew the effect she would have, not only on the men present at the conference, but also the men of the media and press corps.¹²⁴ Mme. Binh's looks, presence, and role in the conference were used to gain international attention to the Communist cause by drawing sympathy towards Mme. Binh not only as a woman but as a member of the Viet Cong as well.

During the French and American wars, Vietnamese women performed a variety of roles that challenged traditional gender norms, maintaining certain traditional gender concepts, such as femininity and motherhood. Through contributing to the war effort, Communist leaders intentionally manipulated Vietnamese women by playing on their hopes of greater equality at war's end. Due to the Cold War gender culture in America, American military leaders and soldiers viewed Vietnamese women as submissive and weak. Thus, Americans were vulnerable to the use of Vietnamese women as spies and combatants who were not just defined by their domestic and feminine traits as the familiar narrative would have you believe. Rather, Vietnamese women participated in war by organizing missions, engaging in espionage, and assuming roles such as guerrilla fighters, guides, and gunners. They simultaneously conformed to and contradicted gender norms through their diverse combat and support roles.¹²⁵

The perpetuating traditional gender norms were seen as inferior by the Americans, who failed to consider that Vietnamese culture is different from the U.S. and other Western

countries. Motherhood in Vietnamese culture is considered part of a woman's identity and is something most women yearn for. It is also something for which the government praised women, even before their military service. They would use the war as a way to prove their skills and capabilities to men. Motherhood and the desire to be a wife denies women's ability to make decisions to themselves, according to the Americans.¹²⁶ However, wife and mother are undisputed roles that Vietnamese women desired and were willing to fight for.

Some women joined the army not only for fighting for freedom, they rather fought for equality, liberation and feminism. American and Western women who were fighting a similar social and political battle at home, would assume that Vietnamese women fought for the freedom promised them by the Northern government. Through promising equality, women would feel indebted and loyal to the government. The war was an occasion to prove their skills to men to gain equality. However, women's equality was not truly a priority for the North Vietnam government; rather, women were seen as assets the government was more than willing to utilize during the war. Though Equality is noted in the official Viet Cong regulations, it insincerely claims that the Viet Cong fight for equality, yet later states that "freedom and rights will be discussed further." This suggests that there were no current plans for women's equality or their status in politics and culture.¹²⁷

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Part Four: Captivity of the Mind: Alienation, Trauma, and Narrative Healing

This part explores how American soldiers confronted alienation in Vietnam, postwar trauma at home, and how they used storytelling as a tool for healing. While a previous chapter explored ideological alienation, highlighting how American POWs constructed and dehumanized the Vietnamese ‘other’ through political and ideological discourse, chapter one of this part shifts focus to cultural alienation. It examines how moving from one cultural context to another resulted in the American captives’ culture shock, as they encountered unfamiliar norms of cultural understanding. This chapter explores how dislocation, especially in war zones, fosters a deep sense of alienation, leading individuals to experience internal conflict and trauma. The alienation process will be studied as one phase of culture shock, in which the prisoners’ defense mechanisms to resolve the cultural conflict tend to the extreme favouring isolation and rejection. It is these defense mechanisms that can be presumed to be working in the captivity narratives with their emphasis on subjective isolation and the rejection of the Vietnamese culture.

The alienation in Vietnam takes its theoretical inspiration from Edward T. Hall’s *The Silent Language* (1959). Hall’s key message is that one must learn to understand the unconscious aspects of communication. Its ultimate purpose is to reveal the broad extent to which culture controls our lives. In his analysis of cross- cultural communication, Hall pays attention to the ways in which people talk to one another without the use of words, placing particular emphasis on time and space as elements in intercultural communication. His book is a complex and detailed anthropological theory about the nature and vocabulary of culture. It looks at categories of communication which can be used to compare any two cultures. Hall

analyses not only conversation, but also a number of non-verbal communication areas, with good illustrative scenarios, for the variety of attitudes toward personal space, and use of time.

While the experience of alienation took root during the soldiers' time in Vietnam, upon returning to the United States, many veterans found themselves unable to reinsert in society, as the psychological dislocation and emotional disconnection they had experienced during the war evolved into more enduring form of trauma. The internal conflict and fragmentation, with a lack of societal understanding or support, often manifested as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), unveiling the lasting psychological and emotional impact of war that kept them feel isolated long after their physical captivity had ended. To delve into the profound psychological impact on veterans, their experiences will be analyzed through the lens of Jeffery Alexander's *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004). It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how veterans harrowing experiences in Vietnam has left long-lasting scars on their mental well-being and societal integration. Through cultural Trauma Theory lens, we can understand the legacy of trauma not only as a personal psychological disturbance but as a culturally shared phenomenon that continues to shape national memory, identity, and policy.

Chapter two sheds light on the ways in which writing served as a form of therapy and healing for prisoners. Writing was the only escape for the prisoners whose stories transcended the hard times to that of ideologies. In war narratives, writing not only enables the soldiers to express their thoughts and emotions but also serves as a means of reclaiming agency and

identity in captivity. The captives experience a profound sense of disconnection in foreign lands; however, writing created a space for them to reflect on their emotions and assert their agency. The soldiers' traumatic experiences in Vietnam can be analyzed through Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). It will explore the healing power of words, as their trauma and alienation pushed them to write as a means of healing. It also offers a framework to understand how writing allows the captives to revisit and symbolically master their trauma.

In addition to the psychological impact of captivity on American soldiers which lead them to paint a black image of their captors, the psychoanalytical conception of traumatic experience will be linked to their experiences within captivity. The role of writing will be explored not only as a means of recording their stories, but also as a form of resistance against the physical confines of captivity and as a source of solace through the realm of creativity. In this way, the narratives served as a therapy that enables the prisoners to cope with trauma and maintain their identities as Americans. Through writing, they confronted their feelings of otherness and disconnection, asserting their agency and identity. As a postcolonial concept, alienation is a complex phenomenon that reflects the impact of the legacy of colonialism on the American prisoners of war who work towards healing and reclaiming their identities.

Chapter One: Legacies of the War: Alienation and Postwar Trauma

1-Captivity and Alienation in Vietnam

Collen Ward in *The Psychology of Culture Shock* (2005) states that the effective intercultural interactions are often hampered by the fact that participants are unaware of the subtle, culturally-defined rules and regulations that govern social encounters.¹ The prisoners of war were shocked and disoriented because they were culture bound, so instead of trying to understand the culture of their hosts, they reacted very strongly against it, especially in their conditions as “slaves”, or prisoners. The imprisonment within Vietnam reminds us of what Samuel P. Huntington writes in *The Clash of Civilisations* (1993):

It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be **cultural**. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.² (the bold is mine)

Huntington’s theory principally revolves around the clash between the civilizations of ‘the West’ and ‘Orient’, recognizing that Vietnam is seen by the Americans as part of the Orient. As non-Christian people, Vietnamese are frequently associated with Muslims in Western discourse, reflecting a generalized perception of religious and cultural otherness. By constructing the Vietnamese captors as monstrous, Americans were able to portray their country as just and honourable. The way in which Americans view the Vietnamese people,

therefore, accelerated their alienation as they refuse any kind of acculturation. The idea of the American identity as superior to that of the other allowed America to claim the civilizing mission. The fact of helping non-communists to fight Communism, and finally interfering and sending troops to fight in Vietnam shows that America did inherit the European views of imperial expansion. Beyond embodying the problems facing Americans, the tales of imprisonment offer a story of American strength, endurance and even prosperity. They persistently explore cultural changes, divisions, and differences occasioned by the captives' cultural crossings. In telling a different story structured on different cultural values (food, clothes, faith and traditions), the narrators portray the host culture as not only different from the one left at home, but also inferior and exotic:

Contact between culturally diverse individuals is as old as recorded history. People brought up in one culture have always visited other societies to trade with, learn from, or exert influence in foreign lands. Most societies have experienced visitors from abroad, welcoming them if their motives were seen to be benevolent, or resisting the newcomers if they came to invade, pillage, or exploit.³

The fact of being created equal and free did not imply the right of living so within their imprisonment in Vietnam. It is often argued that crossing cultures entails travellers' entrance into different sets of languages, rituals, and institutions, making identities as discursive practices. The prisoners' plight was due to the fact that they felt assaulted in their sense of identity, of who they are and their newly gained dignity as citizens. As already mentioned, the encounter with the other is not new but it traces its origins back to the Barbary captivity narratives. The captives' experience of captivity and crossing cultures occasioned their

revision of identities and of the culture that constitutes them. The American saw liberty as individualistic and natural concept giving every human being the right of exercising his will in a free society.⁴

Instead of a God-ordained society, Americans spoke of reason. Instead of regarding sin as inherent in man, they pinned their faith to human perfectibility and believed that education could be the human personality.⁵ The Vietnamese people are seen as primitive people, who do not believe in themselves as autonomous and self-reliant. The American would have never know about his/her specific identity and never emphasize its uniqueness if the cultural encounter never take place. The notion of the American identity being specific and the fact that the American refuse to assimilate or fuse in the identity of the ‘other’ reminds us of the Barbary captivity narratives. A case in point comes with Royal Tyler in *The Algerine Captive* (1797), where Tyler’s debate with the Mullah did not bring any change in his faith, but it helped him to construct a stable identity.⁶ It becomes clear that early notions of American identity found its origin in the heart of that cross-cultural encounter, within the prisons and the dungeons of Barbary Captivity. Through rejecting of the ‘other’ and resisting acculturation and conversion, the American captives preserved their identity by defining it in opposition to the host culture.

The spirit of American exceptionalism manifests itself in the POWs’ belief that the United States’ government and citizenry serve as idealistic templates for the rest of the world to emulate. The prisoners exclaimed that they are missionaries to bring civilization to the land of communism, “I believed that what we were doing in Vietnam was right, that we were trying

to contain Communist aggression,” wrote Red McDaniel, “and even if the South Vietnamese didn’t particularly care whether democracy or a dictatorship ruled their lives, the point was that the United States was trying to draw the line here for the Free World.”⁷ This personal/political split offered the only hope for the POWs’ captors. John McCain considered the North Vietnamese “the enemy from a technical standpoint, just like we thought of the German people as our enemies,” but “communism, the take-over of southeast Asia, and the leaders of North Viet Nam” were the *real* foes.”⁸ Charlie Plumb declared that the most powerful free nation in history could not idly watch the Communist world gobble up and dissolve sovereign nations, and the North Vietnamese had already been swallowed: “We compared our lot with that of the guards. While POWs were behind bars, the Vietnamese were captives inside their own bamboo borders. We considered ourselves more fortunate than they. One day we’d leave our cells.”⁹

The POW’s perceptions of Americans, after his experiences with their Vietnamese captors, harken back the stereotypes that preachers in the United States were establishing for generations. Alienated in the land of imprisonment, the American prisoners found themselves in contexts that necessitated a revision of the discourses of knowledge and the identity of white society. The Americans not only praise themselves as the blessed human beings, but also construct their values and social norms as the ideal norms for other nations to follow. Donald Rander simply “pitied” the Vietnamese people: “I was a prisoner for 5 years. They’re prisoners for the rest of their lives.”¹⁰

Studying the Silent Language of culture, Edward Hall comments on the notion of time, which is one of the reasons behind the POWs alienation, by saying that the Americans not only schedule time, but look ahead towards the future.¹¹ They are preoccupied with change and want to know how to overcome resistance to change. According to him, time is handled much like a material, and somewhat immoral to have two things going on at the same time.¹² He further asserts that “there are those, of a psychological bent, who would say that we are obsessed with time [...] We have stressed this aspect of culture and developed it to a point unequalled anywhere in the world, except, perhaps, in Switzerland and north Germany.”¹³

The conception of time as forward looking is strongly expressed in the narratives. The way of appreciating or handling time marked the difference between the so-called civilized America and the ‘inferior’ Vietnam. According to Collen Ward, people from complex cultures pay attention to time which is seen “as money, to be spent, to be saved or, in unfortunate circumstances, to be wasted.”¹⁴ Hall gives a concise definition of time in the Western world, and specifically in America where the Americans tend to think of time as something fixed in nature, something from which they cannot escape. By contrast, in other cultures, time is less valuable than commodity.¹⁵ On meeting people from more and less complex cultures, Americans tend to perceive the Vietnamese people as crude and living in a stone age:

Felt like I had been through a time machine, from the year 2,000 back to the year maybe 1,000, perhaps 1,000 B.C. The people were that primitive and crude, both in appearance and their dress, their conduct especially, and the tools that they used to beat us with.¹⁶

The alienation of the captives pushed them to produce narratives which helped to construct the American identity and portrayed an important phase in the US and the world's history, but "Unfortunately, no scholar has extensively collected the publication data on the Barbary histories in the way that the publication history of the captivity narratives has been documented,"¹⁷ states Paul Baepler. What was already known about captivity was known from Barbary literature prevalent at that time. In his commentary on nineteenth-century travel writing, Edward Said notes that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes.¹⁸

The quest for a better future is prominent in the tales of imprisonment. Hall speaks for the authors of the narratives, when he writes: "As a rule, Americans think of time as a road or a ribbon stretching into the future, along which one progresses. The road has segments or compartments which are to be kept discrete ("one thing at a time"). People who cannot schedule time are looked down upon as impractical."¹⁹ In short, the Vietnamese are not progressive people in comparison to the Americans, who consequently experienced a sense of alienation and refusal to assimilate.

The same rhetoric of suffering within Barbary captivity narratives is repeated in the POWs' stories of imprisonment. They suffered in Vietnam, neither their number nor the degree of their abuse, but nationality, military rank, and cultural significance account for the American POW's prominence.²⁰ Though the Camp Authority claimed that the Hanoi POWs were getting better food and medical care than most North Vietnamese, the inevitable small

bowls of rice, and the deadly timetable of watery pumpkin soup for half the year and watery soup greens for the other half led to fifty-pound weight drops and gastrointestinal misery for the meat-and-potatoes Americans.²¹ This scene reminds us of John Foss, who says it clearly, that they are not used to this diet. In other words, they cannot digest very easily because of the cultural contradiction to their own dietary regime. Cathcart points to the fact that this diet does not procure the energy necessary for the hard labour:

Figure to yourself above a thousand poor wretches, many of them half naked, without hat or shoes [...] add to this that they only received two small loaves of **black bread** of seven ounces each in all the day and a very small portion of horse beans, probably without any oil, as their small allowance is given out the day before and is generally either stolen or made away with [...] they then receive a loaf of the same sort of bread, but weighing twelve ounces which is all they ever receive on Friday.²² (the bold is mine)

Obviously, in so many occasions the captives mention food inferiority within Algiers, which is among the factors that marked the alienation, as it is explained in a previous chapter about food and identity. The coarse bread, olives, and vinegar, according to Foss, represent the only meal that was served in Barbary. However, the French priest offered them delicious white bread. The distinction between the captives and their masters is based on the type of the bread they eat. The black bread is used for the Algerian masters and the white bread is used to the captives. As a norm of cultural understanding, food highlighted their culture shock as it was insufficient and different from what they were used to at home. It also reflects the vertical social and economic distinction between not only the rich and the poor but between the ones who pretend to be civilized and the others who are supposed to be inferior. “Bread

does not as such constitute a signifying unit: in order to find these we must go further and look at its varieties. Each variety of bread is a ‘unit of signification,’²³ writes Roland Barthes.

Locked up in fifty cells, the malnourished Hanoi POWs suffered constantly from dysentery, wracking fevers, respiratory ailments, and chronic skin infections. The jungle camps were worse; a diet of nothing but rice and manioc forced the POWs to eat rats, and many died from sickness related to profound malnutrition. Ejection injuries and abuse during capture left scores of POWs seriously injured, making the Camp Authority’s fondness for the tackling “medical problems only after political problems are resolved”²⁴ They were only given a bottle of water a day, POW nurse Monika Schwinn declares: “how can you deal with people who are sympathetic one minute and won’t even give you a swallow of water the next.”²⁵

Like Barbary captivity narratives, rats, mosquitoes, and other vermin swarmed in the cells; intestinal parasites flourished. Brought low by diet injuries, and disease, frequently until delirious and caked in their own excrement, the POWs at these times posed little threat to their captors. However, isolation was worse than what have been already mentioned, as “isolation could break my own willingness to resist. Physical torture may have ended, but there is still no torture worse than years of solitary confinement.”²⁶ Rats “the size of a large cat” roamed his cell; when Everett Alvarez looked outside, he saw “that the bushes and trees were alive with rats, hundreds of them.” Meals were even worse:

Typically, he would uncover a bowl to find a chicken head floating in grease. There would be small pieces of carrot and kohlrabi, and occasionally the hoof of a cow, mule, or pig. There would also be nails, fingernail clippings, strands of coarse animal hair, and shrimp, unshelled, uncleaned, and staring at him through eyes that had not been removed. Once, he was served a

blackbird complete with feathers, lying on its back with its feet sticking up, but with its eyes closed.²⁷

Such conditions led to “severe intestinal disorders,” and because of dysentery, diarrhea, and fevers, he could soon “fit his hand around his thigh-bone; he had weighed 155 pounds when he was shot down, and within a few weeks he was skin and bones.”²⁸ Everett Alvarez, however, fought back by keeping his cell spotlessly clean, and though “he would vomit the meals up,” he forced himself “to eat them again, even though they were full of blood.”²⁹ His main weapons for fending off despair were physical and mental exercise, ritual, and prayer. Each day he said Mass(faith) before an altar he had carved on the wall. Imaginary conversations kept him sharp, and as Columbus Day turned into Thanksgiving, and Thanksgiving into Christmas, he thought about his wife and parents to pass the time.³⁰

Many POWs suffered through similar periods: by describing Alvarez’s methods for fighting off his loneliness. Some POWs were punished for communicating, they went into isolation for trying to contact someone in solitary, and they also formed the first command unit.³¹ Though they threatened severe punishment, Rodney Knutson still wouldn’t answer questions, and soon he was in a cell with rats the size of jackrabbits. When his guards discovered he had thrown some food into his toilet bucket, the Camp Authority demanded an apology to the Vietnamese people, but Knutson refused. During his worst moments, Risner had like the savior wondered about God’s plan: “He still was confident that God would let him die before. He would allow his country’s enemy to extract more from him than he was

allowed to give.”³²These appalling prison conditions compelled the captives to turn to writing as means of escape and a way to preserve their mental health.

As the POW waited out his captivity, then, bad food and medical care devastated his body while sensory stimulation and deprivation disordered his mind, living conditions which made him all too vulnerable to abuse.³³ Like the captives in captivity narratives, the POWs were beaten and forced to sit again, “if they fell asleep, they were shaken awake; if they fell down, they were beaten and forced to sit again”³⁴The POW comes to disgust his body which expresses an advanced degree of rejection and depression, under torture, as POW Elaine Scary explains: “not only the feeling ‘my body hurts,’ but the feeling ‘my body hurts me.’”³⁵His disgust with his body, an understandable response for someone living in deplorable conditions, eating food laced with dirt and bugs, and sleeping beside buckets of human waste, aroused a hatred almost as strong as the one he felt for his captors.

POW life under the Camp Authority amounted to long stretches of boredom and depression punctuated by moments of intense pain and rage. According to Michel Foucault, such a prison “must be an exhaustive disciplinary apparatus: it must assume responsibility for all aspects of the individual, his physical training, his aptitude to work, his everyday conduct, his moral attitude, his state of mind.” Even more than “the school, the workshop, or the army, which always involved a certain specialization,” the modern prison is “omnidisciplinary”, an institution of total control.³⁶ In *The Birth of the Prison* (1975), Michel Foucault points that isolation provides an intimate exchange between the convict and the power that is exercised over him.³⁷The depressed feelings began when they first entered Hanoi Hilton, where the first

impression led them to judge them to be bureaucratic, “that from now on everything was to happen according to party line, by the numbers, with bureaucratic humorlessness.”³⁸

The move from one cultural context to another is not easy, especially in the context of war, where disorientation of unusual cultures is compounded by survival pressures and alienation. This strain is further intensified by prevailing beliefs at home, particularly the notion that non- American cultures are inherently inferior, a mindset that influences how the unfamiliar is perceived, often reinforcing prejudice and misunderstanding. Therefore, their sense of depression and isolation was driven not only by the war, but also by their perception of the local cultural norms as both inferior and fundamentally different.

The North Vietnamese flooded the international media with petitions, letters, declarations, tapes, and films that displayed the POWs’ repentance and atonement. Though torture was virtually useless for altering hearts and minds, then, the POWs found it brutally effective at extorting statements couched in the institution’s terms.³⁹ Disoriented, alienated, and later on traumatized, the POWs mirrored the Western progressive tradition which had led most countries, at least publicly, to renounce torture. Since, historically, any torturing society was culturally regarded as inferior, many POWs thus saw the North Vietnamese as primitive, inflicting pain on their betters. The POWs were not only fighting in the battle, but the fight continued after the battle (in the prisons, where they were tortured). In this regard, Craig Howes comments:

This civilized response, however, did little but fuel self-righteous hate; the second, “dynamic” response sustained personal and group morale far more effectively. In this scenario, torture was not only the American fighting man’s

ultimate test, but also *a confession extorted from the Camp Authority*—an admission that the struggle in Hanoi was not between the all-powerful North Vietnamese and their victims, but between equal and worthy opponents. Torture in short was conclusive proof that the POWs' fight was continuing after battle.⁴⁰

When Charlie Plumb went into the ropes, his guards seemed “drugged,” exhibiting “wide and glassy eyes.” He declares that “they maliciously kicked me in the sides, the limbs, the back, and the head, giggling and having a great time.”⁴¹ They picked him up a few feet from the floor and dropped him. Since he was on his side most of the time, they especially enjoyed standing on his head, “symbolically victorious.”⁴² In Vietnam, the single most important misunderstanding between captive and captor arose over the meaning of the extortion. Since the POWs were most proud of defended their identity and resisting ideological conversion, they saw each torture session as a cry of defeat from their captors. The POWs' plight was due to the fact that they felt assaulted in their sense of identity, of who they are and their newly gained dignity as citizens. Their experience of captivity and crossing cultures occasioned their revision of identities and of the culture that constitutes them. The American saw liberty as individualistic and natural concept giving every human being the right of exercising his will in a free society.⁴³

Indeed, Larry Guarino's dream is one of many such vignettes dotting the POWs' histories and memoirs. Usually provoked by suffering, these visions assured the POW that some greater power, God, America, or his fellow prisoners, would sustain him. Confessions that can be carried away on a piece of paper or on a tape is like converting sinners or revealing

the truth, when they refuse, they receive physical pain and torment.⁴⁴The POWs refused to confess despite suffering and torture. Larry Guarino was losing hope when he was shot down in 1965; he had endured the horrible food, the mosquitoes and vermin, the harassment and beatings, the terrors of solitary, the leg irons, torture cuffs, and ropes for more than two years.⁴⁵ Guarino told his roommate that even God seemed to have abandoned them: "I've prayed ten million prayers, Ron," he said, "We're not getting any help, and I don't think we're gonna get any. I think He just worries about big things, like whether the world is gonna continue or not. I don't think He gives a damn about you and me anymore." ⁴⁶ These statements reflect the depth of despair, alienation and spiritual dislocation, and highlights not only a loss of faith in God, but also highlights the intense psychological burden of trauma.

As far as Jim Stockdale is concerned, his announced topic when addressing audiences back home was "how a group of middle Americans, average American guys who have chosen military life as a profession, survived in a POW situation and returned home with honor."⁴⁷ The harsh treatment and challenging conditions they faced left them feeling disoriented, as their rank was not respected or acknowledged in prison. The pride in being just another American doing his best appears repeatedly in the POW memoirs, but nowhere more explicitly than in Charlie Plumb's *I'm No Hero* (1973), which claims that captivity had merely added him to "the ranks of millions of Americans who have applied heroic principles in overcoming hardships."⁴⁸

The American prisoners in Vietnam were alienated and refused to adjust in the host culture because of the different and 'inferior' cultural norms mentioned above. However,

some accounts show that some POWs lived a normal life through celebrating anything and everything, birthdays, anniversaries, religious holidays, Groundhog Day, Jewish Independence Day. They were even entertained by gifted storytellers with Hemingway and Faulkner stories, or versions of *Gone with the Wind*, *Advice and Consent*, and *The Caine Mutiny*. Men would ask, “Have you heard the latest movies?” and at year’s end, the POWs gave out their “own form of Academy Awards.”

Some story tellers even filmed their own scripts, as a proof that they were enjoying their sojourn rather than imprisonment in Vietnam. Some POWs enjoyed life outside the walls of prison through attending Hanoi University, where courses in history, political science, biology, astronomy, literature, poetry, mathematics, and a broad range of foreign languages were available. In addition to instruction in auto mechanics and dairy farming, Classes “in a lighter, less academic vein” included “hunting, gun classes, camping, stereo, photography, book reports, music and art. Basket weaving, meat cutting, and wine appreciation were popular.

In this research, a huge number of cultural incidents related to the local culture are negotiated differently by the authors under study according the degree in of cultural shock. If some POWs’ captivity narratives are qualified as a success story of young men who has overcome an initial cultural shock, other fictional accounts can be characterized as a philosophical tale narrative undermines all bigotry no matter the culture where it finds fertile ground. The alienation experienced by American POWs was brought out both by the new culture at home as well as the Vietnamese culture.

It follows from this study that American POWs' tales of imprisonment were not solely the product of an early American black image of the Orient, but that of a cultural shock brought out by contact of two strikingly different cultures under war-time conditions. Even under normal and ordinary conditions, contact with cultures other than one's own involves a whole psychological process of acculturation that some people manage to undertake successfully by accepting differences and adjusting to foreign ways of life accordingly, while others, who can be called the maladjusted or alienated, are incapable of crossing cultures. When the latter describe the cultures of other people, they generally give us a stereotypical vision of these cultures.

2-Haunted at Home: Veterans' Postwar Trauma

A-The Impact of Trauma on Veterans' Lives After Returning Home

The Vietnam War was a traumatic and divisive conflict that resulted in significant psychological as well as emotional scars for the American veterans. Unlike the previous wars, the Vietnam war became a defining cultural and psychological turning point for American society and the soldiers who fought in it. Many Vietnam War veterans experienced a double alienation; one during their time in Vietnam and another when they returned home. The Vietnam War (1955–1975) is one of the most controversial and psychologically scarring conflicts in American history. It marked a significant shift from previous conflicts in terms of tactics, public support, media coverage, and the experiences of the veterans upon returning home. The veterans found themselves in a country that was deeply divided, often hostile, and unprepared to acknowledge or support their experiences. The disparity between the veterans' sacrifices and the reception they received led to a cultural trauma affected both veterans and the American public, creating a shared psychological wound.

More than 2.7 million Americans served in the Vietnam War, and around 58,000 lost their lives. However, the emotional and mental scars of the war can be just as severe and enduring as the physical casualties. The war had a lasting impact on the mental health and well-being of many veterans, leading to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that continues to affect many veterans and their families to this day. Jeffrey Alexander's *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004) suggests that traumatic events

can significantly influence a society's collective memory, identity, and cultural narratives. It highlights the role of cultural symbols, rituals, and narratives in shaping how individuals and communities understand and deal with trauma. By analyzing how trauma is constructed and communicated through cultural institutions, *Cultural Trauma* theory offers insights into how societies negotiate and address traumatic experience.⁴⁹ Trauma studies had been developed thanks to the Vietnam war and its veterans, with the emergence of PTSD as a clinical diagnosis, leading to the development of a body of literature on trauma. Cultural Trauma was developed in order to explain these shared experiences, portraying these veterans not only as victims, but as catalysts for cultural reflection and change.⁵⁰

Cultural Trauma Theory expands the concept of trauma beyond the individual psyche, emphasizing that trauma has the ability to impact entire groups when they experience events that fundamentally alter their sense of identity and moral order. A traumatic event becomes cultural trauma only when communities consider it as a threat to their collective identity, leading to public discussions, institutional responses, and symbolic representation. The veterans' trauma gained cultural status over time as their stories became more widely known and influenced societal perceptions of war, heroism, and reshaped how America understands war, heroism, and responsibility.⁵¹

In order to understand the depth of trauma experienced by American Vietnam veterans, it is important to understand the specific circumstances of the war they were involved in, as well as the historical and cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s. The Vietnam War took place during a time of tremendous social upheaval: the civil rights movement, the

counterculture revolution, and increasing distrust in political institutions. American soldiers were often conscripted into a war they did not understand. The unclear military goals and Viet Cong's guerrilla tactics led to a disorienting battlefield atmosphere. Instead of being welcomed as heroes, many Vietnam veterans were met with protests. The absence of public recognition worsened their trauma and contributed to feelings of alienation and betrayal.⁵²

For the men who served in Vietnam and survived unspeakable atrocities, returning home offered its own kind of trauma. The Vietnam War lasted from 1964-1973, the longest war in American history, where men came back from Vietnam by themselves rather than with their units or companies. "The collective emotion of the country was divided,"⁵³ declared Jerry Lembcke, a sociologist and author of *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam*. "For the family whose son is just coming back, you aren't going to have a public welcoming home ceremony when someone's son just down the road was just sent off to Vietnam."⁵⁴ The Americans were reluctant to acknowledge defeat as the soldiers were going through the continuous cycle of deployment. Lembcke declares that "Vietnam was a lost war, and it was the first major lost war abroad in American history."⁵⁵

In early January 1969, twenty-one-year-old Steven A. Wowwk arrived as an infantryman in the Army's First Cavalry Division in Cam Ranh Bay, to fight in an escalating and increasingly unwinnable war. By June, Wowwk had been wounded and was sent back to the United States for treatment at Boston's Chelsea Naval Hospital. Wowwk and other wounded servicemen felt excitement at being back on American soil; however, his excitement turned to confusion en route to the hospital. Wowwk first encountered hostility as a veteran

when he looked out the window and saw civilians stop to watch the small convoy of hospital-bound vehicles. “I remember feeling like, what could I do to acknowledge them, and I just gave the peace signal,” Wowwk says. “And instead of getting return peace fingers, I got the middle finger.”⁵⁶

The Vietnam veterans experienced trauma manifested in various psychological symptoms now linked to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Upon returning at home, the soldiers experienced flashbacks, nightmares, hyper-vigilance, emotional numbness, and aggressive behavior became common among returning soldiers. However, these symptoms were often dismissed or misunderstood until the official recognition of PTSD in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III) in 1980.⁵⁷ The veterans were seen as unstable, dangerous, and isolated them from mainstream society. This delay in recognition shows a wider cultural failure to acknowledge and incorporate the trauma of the Vietnam War into national identity.

The cultural silence surrounding Vietnam veterans can be interpreted as a form of secondary trauma. While the primary trauma was experienced by the soldiers on the battlefield, the refusal of society to listen, acknowledge, or care for these veterans created another wound, a social exclusion that prevented recovery. According to *Cultural Trauma Theory*, the public act of witnessing is essential for transforming private suffering into shared meaning.⁵⁸ For years, Vietnam veterans were denied this opportunity. The prevalent cultural narratives at that time focused on political blame, anti-war activism, and the morality of the war itself, rather than the lived experiences of the soldiers. The fact of marginalizing the

veterans delayed the process of collective mourning and contributed to the development of cultural trauma.

The American government failed to fulfill its promises, providing the veterans with an institutional response marked by indifference. Peter Langenus, the Commander of Delta Company, 3rd Battalion/7th Infantry, 199th Light Infantry Brigade from 1969-70, led his troops on 30-day operation in some the most inhospitable conditions in Vietnam, “without shaving, bathing or changing clothing. None of that,” he says, “prepared me for the reception at home upon our return.”⁵⁹ Upon his return the United States, Langenus quickly found out the GI benefits available for Vietnam veterans “were almost nonexistent.” While living in New York, he started to experience symptoms of malaria, yet he was illegible for VA health care as he did not display those symptoms during his time in Vietnam. When he tried to find a job, he also encountered discrimination from law firms upon learning he was a Vietnam infantry veteran. Christian Appy, History professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and author of three books on Vietnam, declared that the society was ill-prepared to give these guys what they deserved. “They were not necessarily looking for a parade, but they were certainly looking for basic human support and help in readjusting to civilian life after this really brutal war.”⁶⁰

One of the reasons behind this situation is economy which was one of the most robust in American history after the World War II, but during and after Vietnam the United States faced a period of economic stagnation. As more wartime atrocities were revealed, Vietnam veterans were increasingly burdened with a sense of guilt and shame, being perceived as

participants in a brutal and unsuccessful war. Films like *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Coming Home* (1978) and *First Blood* (1982) perpetuated the stereotype of the homeless, broken Vietnam veteran in popular culture. It was not until almost twenty years after the war ended that America started to get right with Vietnam veterans. “The Vietnam veterans, we couldn’t believe it. We could not understand getting letters from school kids,”⁶¹ says Langenus as Vietnam Syndrome came to an end. Since 9/11, patriotic actions such as wearing flag pins and expressing gratitude for military service have become common with the increasing deployment of troops to Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the veterans’ paths were not without problems as some marriages ended while the men suffered war hardships and their wives back home faced anxiety, fear, and solitude. In some cases, spouses at home just moved on through initiating without the knowledge of their spouses until their eventual return.

Charlie Plumb is a case in point as his story is one of incredible resilience; however, he also experienced profound emotional and psychological trauma, including personal loss, such as the dissolution of his marriage during his imprisonment. Plumb who was shot down and held as a prisoner of war for nearly six years in a North Vietnamese prison. In his memoir, *I’m No Hero* originally published in 1973, he shares his trauma including the story of his failed marriage. One of the most emotional parts of the book is when he describes finding out that his wife had divorced him during his imprisonment. Plumb was enduring the unimaginable hardships of torture, solitude, and heartbreak; however, he turned his pain into an opportunity for personal growth. He transformed into a motivational speaker and mentor, inspiring others to overcome emotional challenges, just as he did.

Some Vietnam veterans have returned to Vietnam as a form of healing and reconciliation with their past. A large number of them live in and around Da Nang, the city that hosted the US military's most active airfield during the war and where the initial American forces landed. David Edward Clark is one of the American veterans who went back to Vietnam, this time not to fight Communists, but to build a new life. After returning to the US after the war, not a day went by without thinking of Vietnam, says Clark, who hides his eyes behind a big pair of sunglasses.:

I often woke up, bathing in sweat. I saw people when they weren't there. Once I got up in the middle of the night, planning to place ambushes around my house, because I thought the Vietcong were coming to get me. The only way I could escape from these memories was by getting drunk. So I drank way, way too much.⁶²

In 2007, Clark was finally able to take a step back through going back to the mountain that separated his platoon from the enemy and for the first time in his life ascended to the summit. "On the top I had a feeling of peace I never had before. There were no more bombs, there was no more fighting, there were no more jet fighters flying over. Then I realised the war is over."⁶³ Returning to Vietnam allowed Veterans to face the physical places where their trauma took place. Being present in the same locations, such as jungles, villages, and battlefields, can help them in dealing with long-buried memories that they have suppressed for a long time.

The experience makes the past feel real, and sometimes easier to cope with. That goes for Richard Parker, who says he "lost the plot" after Vietnam, and for 20 years led a life of

alcohol, drugs and sex. “I was a vagabond who worked in restaurants and who went from town to town. It didn’t matter to me if I was dead or alive,”⁶⁴ he says. Memories of devastation and death in Vietnam tormented him. Parker declared that he was so heavily brainwashed that before he went to war he wanted to kill Communists, but when he left Vietnam, he loved the people there. “How were they dangerous? The only thing they wanted to do was grow rice and make babies,”⁶⁵ he says. For many years, he struggled with post-traumatic stress disorder that affects 11% of Vietnam veterans today, leading to tens of thousands taking their own lives.

Embarking on a healing journey to Vietnam is the only way to find peace and quiet his inner demons. Returning to Vietnam is a way to end frozen memories, says Richard Parker, “As long as you don’t return, you will remember Vietnam as the country of the war.”⁶⁶ Though he occasionally teaches English, most of the ex-vagabond’s time is spent following a basic routine of reading, walking, talking with friends and savoring Vietnamese cuisine. His eyes light up when he describes how working with veterans has made him a happy man again. One of those veterans was Larry Vetter ,a former marine officer whose journey reflects the deep need many veterans had to make sense of the war.

After the war I had a lot of questions, but there was no-one who gave me answers,” says Vetter. “So I went to study myself. And the more I read, the less I understood about why we were sent to Vietnam. I found out how much they lied to us and thought to myself: ‘If I were Vietnamese, I would have fought with the Vietcong.’”⁶⁷

like many Vietnam veterans, Vetter struggled with the moral and emotional burden of the war. He later on returned to Vietnam to face the places and people that shaped his past. Through meeting Vietnamese and visiting battlefields, he realized that many on the other side went through the same trauma. Thus, writing was a way to proceed trauma and put their experiences into words, seeking for the truth and making sense of the past. Through essays, memoirs, and novels, veterans transformed their silence into narratives to help future generations understand the truth about the war.

B-The Battlefield Experience and the Moral Landscape of War

In Vietnam, soldiers were often put in ethically challenging circumstances where they were involved in killing non-combatants, destroying villages, or watching comrades die helplessly. The My Lai Massacre in which American soldiers killed hundreds of unarmed Vietnamese civilians, symbolized the morally corrupt environment that many veterans confronted. Many soldiers carried the guilt of complicity, though not all them participated in such events, and others faced challenges in coming to terms with their role in a war that was increasingly seen as unjust at home.

The collective cultural memory started to shape the perception of veterans as either broken or dangerous, reinforcing their exclusion. The media's portrayal of the war exacerbated this marginalization as the brutality of the war was broadcast into living rooms for the first time in American history. The broadcasting of violent scenes including bombings, wounded soldiers, and civilian casualties revealed the harsh realities of war, making it

impossible to maintain a sanitized narrative of heroism. the case of Vietnam, the failure to acknowledge these narratives resulted in veterans being unfairly scapegoated for a national trauma that remained unresolved.⁶⁸

In the aftermath of the conflict, many veterans withdrew from society, facing difficulties in employment, relationships, and mental health. The lack of support from the government, particularly from the Department of Veterans Affairs, contributed to high rates of homelessness, substance abuse, and suicide among veterans. Communities had a hard time supporting their returning soldiers through such a long, aimless war. Different societal factors came together in 1970s to make it exceptionally challenging for veterans to reintegrate into civilian life. Studies indicate that Vietnam veterans have a notably higher rates of PTSD compared to veterans of other wars. This disparity is attributed not only to the war's intensity but also to the societal response. According to *Cultural Trauma Theory*, the trauma is solely in the event itself but in how society processes and responds to it.⁶⁹ The delayed and often hostile reaction of American society deepened the wound, turning individual suffering into broader cultural trauma.

The 1970s marked the height of deinstitutionalization in the U.S., with a large number of mental hospitals closing down during this time. They were gradually being replaced by more healthy, ethical mental health centers, yet these facilities did not make up for the shortage in mental health care. At that time, the veterans benefits were less abundant in a struggling economy, making it a challenge for some veterans to find careers that suited their skills, especially if they were injured. To escape from mental illness career challenges, some

fell into addiction. Approximately, fifty percent of homeless veterans from War II to the present are Vietnam veterans. There are about 37,000 veterans experiencing homelessness on any given day in 2020. Those at greatest risk are usually between the ages of 46 to 55 and lack family or community to turn to. Solutions for Change offers career training, access to healthcare, shelter and a community that values and validates the experiences of all.⁷⁰

Like the national silence upon their return, the veterans' silence hindered the creation of clear storylines that could contain and provide significance to the hardship. Through storytelling, many veterans attempted to embark on a healing journey, showcasing the importance of narrative in cultural trauma recovery. Memoirs and therapeutic storytelling allowed many veterans to work through their experiences, making their voices heard, challenging prevalent myths and promote empathy. Works like Ron Kovic's *Born on the Fourth of July* and Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried* show how personal stories can become a way for healing cultural wounds, creating a space for dialogue and reflection, which are crucial elements for the cultural healing process.⁷¹

The Vietnam veterans gained more acknowledgment and integration through public commemoration practices. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., signified a turning point in the collective national awareness, inviting personal interaction and reflection and providing visitors the opportunity to find and remember the veterans' names.⁷² The Memorial reflects the shift in cultural attitudes, moving away from celebrating warfare to mourning its human cost. For many Vietnam veterans and their families, the Memorial

represented a sacred sanctuary as it celebrates not only the death but also grief, memory, and survival.

Though delayed, the public recognition of Vietnam veterans reflects a wider societal recognition of the war's cultural trauma. In fact, trauma was only recognized when it was encoded in collective memory and acknowledged publicly.⁷³ The gradual change in the perception of Vietnam veterans from being neglected to being respected individuals, shows that trauma can progress through cultural discussions and governmental support. Few decades later, more forms of public recognition appeared, where Vietnam veterans started to gain respect, receive honors, parades, and educational programs that focused on their narratives. In addition to Popular media which contributed to the redefining the roles of the veterans in the cultural imagination. Movies like *Platoon*, *Full Metal Jacket*, and *The Deer Hunter* depicted the emotional burden resulted from the war, focusing on the internal struggle of the soldiers more than geopolitical agendas. The veterans' narratives provided the American public with another perspective of the war, moving away from assigning blame to promote empathy. According to *Cultural Trauma Theory*, this shift in representation is key to trauma resolution. It indicates that the culture has begun to incorporate the traumatic experience into its shared history.⁷⁴

The Vietnam War strengthened standards of stoicism, aggression, and emotional repression, where soldiers required to endure horror without complaining. Most of the time, returning home resulted in the need for vulnerability and emotional recovery. Many veterans struggled to express their trauma, as they feared being judged and emasculated. The internal

conflict that the veterans face is behind their depression, addiction, and suicide. However, social media and digital technology have influenced the way the story was shared by the veteran to seek for recognition. Online platforms provided opportunities for storytelling, activism and community building. In order to share their narratives and advocate for policy change, veterans' groups use websites, forums, and social media. Thus, the collective memory was shaped by the digital stories which made it possible to document and share trauma beyond traditional gatekeepers, and democratizing the trauma narrative.⁷⁵

Cultural trauma does not only affect people who experience it directly but it echoes through time, affecting future generations and reshaping family dynamics and national ideologies. The lack of social support intensified the veterans' trauma that affected their families and communities. This phenomenon is known as intergenerational trauma, demonstrating an essential idea in Cultural Trauma Theory that confirms that when the collective suffering is not adequately expressed, it can become part of the culture and pass down to future generations. Many of the veterans' children were raised in homes where emotions were unstable, silence about the war, and the absence of the war. Some felt abandoned, whereas others tried to compensate for their fathers' trauma through working too hard. The silence around the Vietnam War was worsened as society refused to acknowledge it, leading to emotional repression at home. According to *Cultural Trauma Theory*, trauma can only be healed when it is openly recognized and expressed, otherwise trauma continues to grow. Communities with large number of veterans, especially working class and rural regions, have faced lasting socioeconomic and psychological effects.⁷⁶

Over time, the American Vietnam veterans' narrative evolved, moving from feeling of personal to and collective disgrace to a more empathetic perspective rooted in recognition and symbolic restoration. This evolution shows that cultural trauma is inevitable, is an ongoing process shaped through discourse and representation.⁷⁷ Recently, there has been a remarkable increase in the development of therapeutic models and community-based interventions that draw on the experiences of Vietnam war veterans. Programs emphasizing storytelling and group therapy have become increasingly popular, highlighting the in the veterans' constructing in shaping and sharing their narratives. This is, in fact, a demonstration of the increased recognition of the need to move beyond clinical diagnoses and recognizing trauma's cultural dimensions. The educational institutions have been instrumental in reshaping public memory and fostering healing, as trauma needs to be shared, acknowledged, and symbolically processed in order to promote healing.

C-Cultural Trauma and the Legacy of the Vietnam War

The American veterans' trauma is not merely a deep personal and psychological burden, but also a profound cultural break with lasting consequences. *Cultural Trauma Theory* traces how this break has been addressed, symbolized, and incorporated into the American collective memory. Jeffrey C. Alexander argues that trauma becomes cultural when it threatens a community's core identity, and the trauma is narrated, acknowledged, and shared into the collective narrative.⁷⁸ The veterans' alienation was deepened by this neglect and lack of recognition which meant that Vietnam veterans were not recognized as esteemed warriors, and often viewed as with suspicion.

Overtime, the veterans' narrative began to be shifted thanks to the academic intervention, political pressure, and cultural representations. The recognition of PTSD as a diagnosis, the creation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the representation of veterans in different forms of media played a role the Vietnam veterans' insertion into the cultural fabric. Though these efforts did not mitigate trauma but marked the beginning of recognition of their experiences. Trauma became part of the American national story through public rituals, storytelling, and memorials. While symbolic recognition is important, it is not automatically lead to healing and justice, as many veterans continued to face challenges in accessing healthcare, employment, and psychological support. Structural disparities persisted, especially for veterans of color, and the cultural portrayal of the troubled Vietnam vet sometimes intensified their stigma rather than reducing it.⁷⁹

The experience of Vietnam veteran has fundamentally changed how the United States views war, trauma, and citizenship moral obligations. Their suffering has informed policies on mental health, influenced military procedures, and catalyzed new ways of thinking about moral responsibility of citizenship. The veterans' community has become key site for articulating and healing trauma, exploring larger philosophical questions surrounding memory, acknowledgment, and national identity. *Cultural Trauma Theory* considers trauma as a social phenomenon influenced by politics, power, and narrative instead of an individual experience. In the recent times where new forms of warfare appeared, cultural division, and global refuge crisis, the Vietnam war lessons remain significant. Their trauma serves as a reflection of the national ongoing struggle, aligning its beliefs, authority, past, and future.⁸⁰

Vietnam War is not only remembered through textbooks or memorials, but rather through the absence of men who never returned, the emotional and physical wounds of the ones who came home, and the economic challenges that followed. In these communities, the veterans were alienated and disconnected from politics as well as society. In this context, Cultural Trauma, serves not only as a way of mourning but also as a force of forming identity and political reorganization. It also shapes the peoples' perceptions of themselves in relation to the government and nation-state.

Courses in war literature, American history, and trauma studies are increasingly engaging with Vietnam War narratives through literature, testimonies, and films. Oral history projects and Museums encourage the veterans to share stories, contributing to a richer national memory. These efforts not only preserve historical truths but also provide a chance for intergenerational dialogue, reflecting solidarity and connections across generations. Despite these initiatives, many Vietnam veterans still suffer silently, while younger generations are unaware of the emotional burden of those stories. Political debates over patriotism and military policy risk reopening the war wounds, reminding us that unresolved trauma can lead to revived conflict and social divisions.⁸¹

The Vietnam war was known as a struggle for liberation against imperialism, failing to acknowledge the emotional wounds on Vietnamese soldiers, civilians, particularly the refugees displaced by the conflict. After the fall of Saigon, many Vietnamese immigrants fled to the United States, carrying their own versions of trauma, narrative of grief, and cultural alienation. In the United States, the Vietnam refugees and the American veterans shared their

experience of trauma, creating complicated racial tensions and solidarities. This transcultural dimension confirms that trauma is not only about suffering but about the profound impact it holds on people's sense of understanding. However, the cultural identity that emerges from trauma is influenced by the way suffering is interpreted, whether as defeat or victory.

Through their journey from being invisible to being recognized shows that healing is not only an individual effort but also a collective effort, underscoring the importance of caring for memories and nurturing them with authenticity in order to serve as a source of resilience rather than a burden. The Vietnam war served a cautionary tale that shows the danger of unclear war objectives, psychological wounds as well as moral burden carried by soldiers. The Vietnam narrative can be interpreted as an instance of cultural norms, where the veterans' trauma serves as a lesson for future generations. The following chapter explores how storytelling helped the traumatized veterans to embark on a healing journey, showcasing the importance of narrative in cultural trauma recovery.

Chapter Two: Captivity, Trauma, and the Healing Power of Words

It is irrefutable that captivity narrative is the product of trauma and alienation of its author. It is highly arguable that life after captivity underwent a dramatic change that had remarkably touched several areas of the authors' lives. Miguel de Cervantes literature, for instance, is said to be exceptionally veracious for a psychoanalytic treatment, "Certainly, no writer in Spanish literature seems so insistently to demand a psychoanalytical approach as Cervantes."⁸² Thus affirms Maria Antonia Garcés in the introduction to her pioneering work of its kind, *Cervantes in Algiers: A Captive's Tale* (2002). As a matter of fact, Cervantes had nothing to do with the dire circumstances the catastrophic event entailed: it is rather due to the traumatic essence of this captivity that peculiarity became a pressing issue.

Like Cervantes, captivity narratives' traumatic events in the land of imprisonment or war contexts can be analyzed through Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). A link between the psychoanalytical conception of traumatic experience and authors' experiences in captivity will be explored. Writing was the authors' only means of healing, allowing them to express their emotions and overcome alienation and trauma. The dire circumstances compelled them to craft tales of captivity that attracted readers eager to learn more about the Other, while also introducing new characteristics of novelistic writing and helping to usher in the birth of the novel.

A large array of genres emerged in the Western literature, still the tradition of captivity narratives has proved to be exceptionally crucial, significant and more popular. The reason

behind this peculiarity is the fact that such narratives, compiled in texts devoted extensively or exclusively to documenting a real experience of subjugation in a foreign land. A lot of scholars are allured by this genre that was behind the construction of identities, ideologies, and most importantly gave birth to novel. From the Middle Ages to Modern Times, captivity narratives were not only stories of imprisonment, they were rather replete with socio-economic and political agendas. The tradition of captivity narrative was flourished more with the European colonialism and trade, which attracted merchants to seek more lands to build their colonies and expand their imperial projects. The quest for more colonies was encouraged by the rise of individualism, where the individual is seen as the center of the universe whose mission is to tame and subjugate in order to promote a modern life based on the ideas of enlightenment. Thus, the desire for individual enterprise, traders and adventurers started to explore exotic lands where the meeting with the ‘other’ took place.

Captivity narratives encouraged writers to craft other literary genres which adopted the narratives’ themes and characteristics to give birth to the novel which is the most outstanding literary genre that marked modern history. The urge to craft a story with some degree of realism to settle the traumatic disequilibrium of tales of captivity accelerated in the emergence of the novel which is capable of containing the various psychological derangements in one single piece of writing. Certainly, the shift from dairies and journals of captivity to novels brought about changes in content as well as in form. In order to provide a healing power for the writers whose desire is to overcome captivity trauma, the novel became long and complex in order to weigh between the psychological instability and literary creation. People as well

as governments used this genre in order to spread their ideologies and expand imperial projects, for the novel allured many consumers to feed their hunger about the Other in exotic stories of imprisonment.

In a paper entitled “English Accounts of Captivity in North Africa and the Middle East”, Nabil Matar identifies two types of Barbary Captivity criticism works, which consider captivity accounts as written in the context of “anti-Islamic fear and conflict,” regardless of the immediate purpose of their authorship, which is often dictated by national and personal drives rather than international and ideological intentions; and those who argue that Captivity accounts are far from innocent, personal or idiosyncratic, and they are rather grounded in a culture encircled by imperial pursuits. Therefore, the captive writer, while coming to terms with the traumatic impact of the experience, his narrative is being instrumentally employed to serve maritime trade more than religious polemical speech.⁸³

A large number of scholars dealt with captivity accounts and their ideological agendas, but the healing power of the narrative upon its writer whose trauma set to the foreign policies of a lot of countries, is not given a lot of attention. This study does not limit itself to Vietnam narratives alone but situates them within the broader tradition of captivity narratives. It seeks to demonstrate how, across historical and cultural contexts, captives have turned to writing not merely as a record of experience but as a vital means of coping with and recovering from trauma. Within the land of imprisonment, another cultural contest was set to establish the self and the other. Being far from their home culture and cut from the world, the captives met new norms of cultural understanding that resulted

in an ultimate alienation. In order to escape this alienation, traumatized writers found their sanctuary in writing and crafting narratives that surpass the terrible circumstances to that of ideologies. Trauma manifests itself, in a short period of time to the mind of the patient “with an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way [...] result[ing] in permanent disturbances of the manner in which the energy operates,”⁸⁴ demonstrates the fragmentary nature of the traumatic experience, as it appears sporadically in the life of the traumatized rather than appearing all at once.

The overwhelming influx of excitation engendered by incessantly repetitive threats of pain, affliction and death, precipitates a dramatic change in the function of the psychical apparatus. This was the case of the captives who were mentally affected by their new life in the land of imprisonment within a culture that threatens their identity and belonging. Freud’s life governing principle of mental functioning namely; the pleasure principle, ceases to underlie the workings of the psychical apparatus, as to seek pleasure and avoid pain, under the pressing intensity of the experience befalling the subject and the inadequacy of the psychical apparatus to deal with the situation in like manner. Consequently, the influx of excitation filtering through the psychical apparatus urges the latter to operate “beyond the pleasure principle,” which as Jean Laplanche confirms: “consists in binding the excitations in such a way as to allow for their subsequent discharge.”⁸⁵

The feeling of alienation stems from the fact that the captives were confronted with cultural norms that differed significantly from those they were familiar with at home. Moreover, the captives felt embarrassed when they were stripped off their clothes in return of

some clothes that were seen as unsuitable and hardly sufficient to cover them, so they felt that they abandoned their identity in favour of the host one. The initial influx of excitement that triggered the beginning of their traumatic experience right after their arrival to the land of imprisonment. A case in point comes with John Foss who was scared when he saw the ‘Algerines’ who were shouting and thanking God for their great success, and victories over many ‘Christian dogs’. Foss quotes what the Dey of Algiers declared from their first contact “now I have got you; you Christian dogs, you shall eat stones.”⁸⁶ This shows, according to Foss, that Muslims are also cruel and severe even toward their fellow citizens. In this regard, he writes:

There are cruel punishments, for Christian captives, for capital offences. Sometimes they are burned; or rather roasted alive. At other times they are impaled. This is done by placing the criminal upon a sharp iron stake, and thrusting it up his posteriors, by his back bone’ till, it appears at the back of his neck.⁸⁷

These tears mark the very beginnings of a long-standing struggle of captives’ psychical apparatus to reduce, discharge and “master such excitations and work them out psychically.”⁸⁸ Actually, the source of those excitations was not their experience of arriving to the land of captivity, rather it is new cultural norms of the host culture which were totally different from what the captives has culturally been nurtured with. Representing the Orient, including Vietnam, as despotic lands that opposed the ideals of America accelerated the alienation process. In short, the intensity of captives’ traumatic experience was largely due to the mental representations he invoked as well as constructed prior to his arrival. The captives were also alienated back home as it is explained previously, leading to double alienation.

In his book, *Psychic Trauma: Dynamics, Treatments, and Symptoms*, Ira Brenner inaugurates his discussion on the symptoms of the psychic trauma by coming to terms with what he labels as ‘massive trauma’. Brenner’s definition of the latter intersects perfectly with captives’ agitating experience of alienation from his homeland to be found in an aggressively annihilating community:

The shock of being forcibly pulled from one’s home, eliminated from one’s community, and ousted from one’s homeland has lasting effects on both the body and the soul. It is a massive trauma that viciously assaults one’s identity and all the basic assumptions one has about one’s place in the world. The murder of loved ones, the confiscation of property, the violent atrocities, the starvation, disease, beatings, torture, and slave labor, along with the lost hope for rescue due to feeling utterly forgotten by the world, further the decimation of one’s psyche.⁸⁹

The quotation above demonstrates a significant symptom of psychic trauma manifests itself in the captives’ trial to maintain his relationship to the group he belongs to, i.e. ‘Christians,’ by means of ‘memorializing’ what Brenner labels as ‘chosen trauma’. Through mentioning the hard conditions, the POWs tried to furnish the ground for an ethnic identity, cruelly treated at the hands of their captors. They confessed that they “wrote in the night, while in the prison, after our daily labor was over, the principal events of the day, merely to amuse and relieve my mind from the dismal reflections which naturally occurred...”⁹⁰

Antonio de Sosa composed his monumental historical work *Topografía e historia general de Argel* (1612) in prison, during his captivity, at the same time when Cervantes was a captive in Algiers. De Sosa corroborates that he wrote daily in prison to let the world know about “the great miseries, sufferings, torments and martyrdoms suffered by the Christian

captives at the hands of the Moors and Turks, especially in Algiers.”⁹¹The Colombian poet and novelist Alvaro Mutis elaborates more on Levi’s statement of writing differently, when he recounts writing about his experience in the Mexican penitentiary of Lecumberri:

Thanks to that experience, as profound as real and irrefutable, I have been able to write six novels that I have collected under the title of *Adventures of Marquoll*. Until then I had attempted to tread the paths of narrative writing with some stories collected under the title of *The mansion of Araucaima* [...]. In the thirty years before this event, I had only written poetry.⁹²

It is also the case with captives in Vietnam whose traumatic disequilibrium pushed them to write their narratives. Larry Guarino’s dream is one of several episodes within the POWs’ histories and memoirs. Usually provoked by suffering, these visions assured the POW that some greater power, God, America, or his fellow prisoners, would sustain him.⁹³ His vision, the pain and torment he received when he refused to confess resulted in a trauma that he tried to overcome through the healing power of words. In the light of these testimonial passages, we may safely infer that authorial intentions from implementing writing during captivity differed from one captive writer to another depending on the intensity of the catastrophic event and the way these captive writers see fit “[to signify] their pain and, through that signification, have found a better way to construct and heal themselves.”⁹³ Some of these writers devoted their writing to a ‘higher purpose’ of letting the world know about their suffering in captivity, at the hands of a given ‘devilish’ ethnic group. Others found recourse to writing as a therapeutic instrument to reduce pain and anxiety through verbal communication.

Jeremiah Denton spent nearly eight years in prison where ,alongside his fellows, he developed the “tape code” as a substitute for writing, since written expression was forbidden.The absence of writing during those years marked a forced erasure of voice.Following his liberation,Denton published *When Hell Was in Session* (1976), a memoir through which his silenced suffering was reshaped into a written narrative.For Denton,writing enabled him to reclaim agency, and transform trauma into testimony of personal healing.Similarly, Robert Shumaker, another long-term prisoner,who resisted silence by tracing words in the dust or scratching marks on the prison walls. These gestures of “writing without paper” underscored the profound human need to inscribe one’s existence.Following his release, he turned to writing as a way to process the psychological wounds of captivity and a therapeutic act of reclaiming voice.

During captivity, McCain’s letters to his family were frequently censored, deepening his sense of isolation. Years later, in his memoir *Faith of My Fathers* (1999), McCain reconstructed his ordeal by relating his captivity hardships to his family’s military tradition. Through narration, his trauma was transformed into a story of perseverance, sacrifice, and meaning. His memoir enabled him to organize fragmented memories into a wider narrative of identity, crucial for trauma recovery. Writing, in McCain’s case, served not merely as confession but as a form of restoration.

In Freudian terms, the disturbing influx of excitations, resulting from the dire conditions faced by the captive, results in a severe psychic agitation that would render the psychical apparatus impaired when dealing with these excitations in an ordinary way.

Consequently, shielding from pain caused by that excessive influx, by means of hindering those excitations from surfacing to the consciousness, would likely be the psychical apparatus' recourse. Under these circumstances, Freud expounds his definition of psychic trauma; that an experience would be traumatic if;

[A]ny excitations from the outside... are powerful enough to break through the protective shield [and therefore] provoke a disturbance on a large scale in the functioning of the organism's energy and to set in motion *every possible defensive measure*.⁹⁴

Locating the object of pain in the unconsciousness would provide the trauma victim with an apparent relieved state of mind. However, very soon the victim finds himself/ herself a captive to an endless cycle of nightmares and dreams that haunt his memory. The reappearance of the traumatic elements condensed in a dream work, as well as the reenactment of these unconsciously repressed elements in an outstanding literary creation, demonstrates two important issues: The tight links between literary creation and memory from one hand, and language and the unconsciousness from another.

In *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1978), Jacques Lacan presents his model of explaining human psychology by encapsulating three rivaling orders to Freud's tripartite psychoanalytic model. For Lacan, The Real is the psychoanalytic order that best represents the disguising workings of the psychical apparatus, while shielding the trauma victim from pain and anxiety, by transferring all the agitating influx of excitations into the unconsciousness. Lacan believes that the relationship between the symbolic order revealed by language and the Real order being repressed in the unconsciousness is similar to the

binding connection between the carpet and the floor: While standing on the carpet (symbolic) may endow us with a tinge of being in immediate contact with the Real, the fact of the matter is that the carpet (Symbolic) overlays the floor (Real).⁹⁵

Similar to Freud, Lacan also believes that the unconscious is completely unaware of the concept of time and contradiction; it serves as a storehouse of repressed wishes and fantasies; it is devoid of all syntactic and grammatical significations⁹⁶: “[The Real] or what is perceived as such, is what resists symbolization absolutely.”⁹⁷ However, the significance of Lacan’s Real is the active operating state that gives it a chance of re-appearing or “always com[ing] back to the same place [i.e. repetition compulsion]”⁹⁸ Beneath these chaotic tiles, whose function falls outside the signifying dimension, the symbolic order emerges as an essential mediator to come to terms with unconsciousness (Real), and hence language becomes largely significant, as Jill Barker emphasizes that;

Language is not needed unless something is absent but nevertheless imaginable [...] a being that uses language is constructed out of loss, and loss in return is inextricably linked with desire. It is only in the absence of a desired object that language becomes necessary.⁹⁹

Therefore, under the influence of modes of repetition such as dreams, hallucinations and flashbacks; re-externalization or the compulsion to reconstruct a narrative in writing becomes a “therapeutic outlet,”¹⁰⁰ for reducing discomfort and gaining pleasure. We can observe that the captive considers captivity as a redemption from the original sin ,as it is case with Mary Rowlandson who sees captivity as an opportunity to contemplate and revise her faith. An example of God’s punishing behavior is exemplified in such passages as “I then remembered how many Sabbaths I had lost and misspent, and how evilly I had walked in

God's sight; which lay so close unto my spirit, that it was easy for me to see how righteous it was with God to cut off the thread of my life and cast me out of His presence forever."¹⁰¹ To proceed with this last passage, readers will notice that Rowlandson then introduces the redemptive power of God when she says, "Yet the Lord still showed mercy to me, and upheld me; and as he wounded me with one hand, so he healed me with the other."¹⁰²

The captives turned to writing and literature due to the drive inside them to comprehend their condition. The innate urge to revisit painful experiences, begging for understanding, is Freud's distinctive approach is unearthing traumatic memories by means of *verbalization*. However, we must admit that telling one's histories through writing has little to do with the writers' poetic and discursive manipulations of language; as Judith Harris states, it is rather about "how we suffer and how we seek not to suffer. It is about mitigating pain that cries out across the years for condolence."¹⁰³

Therefore, the associations made between literary creation and the symptoms of the traumatic experience explain the weak correlation between the latter and the memory reconstruction. Splitting and creating doubles can help to protect the mind from the intensity of the influx of excitations characterizing massive trauma. Using allegory in writing is more than just a literary tool, it acts as a shield for survivors to express what feels impossible to say. However, we must be acknowledged that the role of allegorical representation in the novel is more than just a straightforward instance of how traumatic experience burns into the memory of the victim and re-appears in literary creation.

The act of attributing one's own adversities and challenges to an entire community

illustrates the deep impact of trauma, as well as the captive's psychological need to release the overwhelming load of excitations caused by the experience. Sometimes, the overwhelming force of the traumatic experiences that the captive could hardly deal with by simply attributing their experiences to others from the same ethnic group. Thus, the captive tries to settle his agitated mind by either attempting to forget his suffering or by memorizing his experience in the collective memory. In fact, the captives' ordeal is considered as a national crisis by the POWs who connect his ordeal to that of the American nation.

The influence of captivity narratives on the American foreign policy is evident in the fact that Americans linked the imprisonment of its citizens to the imprisonment of the nation. The impact of captivity and hostages in shaping American foreign policy can be traced back to the nation's long history since their first encounter with the American Indians. Despite their high status, as military aviators, in comparison to the Barbary captives, the POWs were not immune to the cultural shock of interacting with a different culture. One finds the same anxiety and the same mechanisms of defense in American captivity narratives without fail. This humiliation was strongly felt by American prisoners in Vietnam as result of being enslaved by a culture that is supposed inferior to his natal culture. Some POWs like Charlie Plumb might potentially achieve their continuous efforts to overcome their past, while others may fail to come to terms with the past and are tormented by continuously haunting nightmares.

Despite some successful survival stories while in captivity, some captives were unable to shake the urge that their experience should be immortalized in the collective memory. This

reminds us of Cervantes who embarked on writing his captivity testimonial account, *Informacion de Argel* (1580), right after his liberation, accounts were released and intended to memorialize the occurrence in the collective memory of the Spanish as well as the European posterity. It is clear that after attaining physical liberation, a compulsion inside him emerged for achieving an “internal liberation” In order to overcome trauma ,the captives used the same therapeutic process used by Holocaust survivors; telling the story of the victim to the sympathized listener. In order to get rid of the haunting memories and nightmares of the traumatic experience, the authors shared their own stories of trauma and suffering to find relief from the haunting memories and embark on a healing journey.

After their liberation, the captives were working towards healing and building their identities after living the ordeal in Vietnam, however, their inner struggle was a complex concept that goes beyond their physical liberation. In fact, writing and crafting the narratives was a way to surpass the emotional as well as psychological burdens they carried. Though, they were liberated, the internal captivity dwelt and manifested in various forms, such as feelings of guilt, shame, fear, or a sense of displacement. In the context of postcolonialism, reaching the internal peace and liberation is not a mere concept, it rather carries a significant weight. Thus, achieving internal liberation pushed the captives to tell their stories to validate their experiences. Through storytelling, the connections were fostered with others who may have gone through similar experiences, creating a sense of solidarity and shared destiny. By sharing stories, the captives can process their trauma, provide catharsis, empowerment towards the internal liberation, and understanding the postcolonial complexities.

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**Part Five: Media, Public Opinion, Protest, and
Amerasians Quest for Belonging**

One can never deny that media from its very beginning not only influenced but shaped the minds of its users. Media images in times of war can be very influential in either reinforcing or changing public and individual opinion. Media coverage during the Vietnam War, especially, demonstrated the ability of media to change public perceptions and feelings about war in general and the country's involvement in war. The Vietnam War therefore marked a turning point in the nature of news coverage of war and the relationship between the media, public opinion, and protests movements in the United States. This is yet another legacy of the Vietnam War which remains relevant today. The American perspective of the Vietnam War or American War as it is called in Vietnam can be well illustrated through people urge to end the waste war which was on TV screen in every single American house.

In order to understand the media's power to shape the public opinion and fueled protest during the Vietnam War, it is better to refer to *Agenda-setting Theory* which dates back to the 1960's when Maxwell E. McCombs and Donald L. Shaw conducted a study on the 1968 American presidential elections. In essence, they compared between what 100 inhabitants of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, believed was the most essential voting issue and what local and national journalism reported as such. The results were highly consistent and correlative, as both sides claimed that the most important concern was, undoubtedly, foreign policy and international affairs. This can be quite understandable, due to the historical and political context of that time. In different words, the Cold War between the US and the USSR, in addition to the rapid spread of the red scare.¹

Before going further into stating and explaining this theory's main assumptions or ideas, readers must first be fully acquainted with the three types of agenda-setting. The initial one is what this theory largely highlights and focuses on; that is, media agenda-setting. The latter, as its name suggest, refers to the press' monstrous, strong ability in determining which subjects or issues are essential and, thus, worthy of being discussed by the audience. The second type is public agenda-setting. This one is the direct result of individuals' deciding which topics or events are more prominent and, hence, which ones should instantly and strictly be prioritized by the media. The final type is policy agenda-setting. In essence, it refers to the firm, powerful capacity of impactful policy-makers in greatly influencing both the press and society by determining which matters are more crucial or valuable to concentrate on.²

Agenda-Setting Theory explains how sustained media attention on particular issues influences public opinion and perception. People were not only reacting to their personal experiences; but they were responding to what was being presented as important in the media. The rise of the antiwar protest movement can also be understood through *Agenda-Setting Theory*, as the protests grew in size and visibility, the media started to extensively report on them. The significance of the protests was magnified by the way the media decided to report them. The media not only selected which issues to highlight but also influenced how the public should think about them by emphasizing specific attributes and interpretations, showing the second level of agenda-setting.

Ultimately, the interaction between media coverage, public opinion, and protest created a powerful force that policymakers could not ignore. This confluence of media-driven agenda-setting, shifting public opinion, and widespread protest contributed significantly to Lyndon B. Johnson's decision not to seek re-election and to the eventual drawdown of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Through the lens of Agenda-Setting Theory, chapter one will explain how media coverage brought certain issues to the forefront, influenced how the public interpreted the war, and elevated the visibility and impact of protest movements. The war was not merely lost on the battlefield; it was also lost in the battle for public perception, a battle in which the media played a decisive role. A follow-up section is added to this chapter to address the role of media in shaping public opinion and fueling antiwar protests, which ultimately influenced the foreign policy and the government decisions to end the war.

Amidst the headlines and protests, a significant long-term consequence of the war has been largely overlooked: the Amerasian children born to American soldiers and Vietnamese women. The Amerasians or the children of the enemy as they are called in Vietnam, rejected by both nations, facing displacement, discrimination, and continuous quest for identity and acceptance. Being of mixed Vietnamese and American heritage, they found themselves on the threshold, not fully recognized as either Americans or Vietnamese. They were seen as 'third space' in terms of their identity as theorized by Homi Bhabha, referring to hybrid spaces that emerge from the interactions of different cultures and identities. Homi Bhabha's *The location of Culture* (1994), and the concept of 'third space' is useful to understand the complex and dynamic nature of their identities, representing a space of negotiation and

resistances they navigate between the cultural influences of their Vietnamese and American backgrounds. The Amerasians represent a complicated narratives that evokes feeling of shame and trauma for both sides.

Thus, chapter two helps to understand how Amerasians occupied the ‘third space’, a liminal, in-between zone where cultural identity is negotiated rather than fixed. Amerasians exemplify the hybridity that challenges rigid national and racial boundaries through their mixed heritage and social exclusion. By examining their experiences through Bhabha’s framework, the chapter reveals how the personal is inseparable from the political in the construction of hybrid identities.

Chapter One: Media and the Public Opinion

During the war, media played an important role in setting the agenda by reporting and exposing the conflict at home to give birth to manifestation and protests. The Vietnam War was the first American war in which reporters sought to take no sides. It was also the first war in which local populations, and their social and economic conditions, were part of the story. Images of the Vietnam War provide historical evidence for understanding the shift in public opinion about the war, from support to opposition. The brutal effect of the war on the native population, and on U.S. and foreign troops, is brought home in the photo images published in magazines and newspapers, and was also depicted in television images.

Among the images most remembered as symbols of the war in Vietnam are those of a Buddhist monk's self-immolation in 1963. In addition to General Loan's street execution of a Viet Cong suspect during the Tet Offensive of 1968, and a little girl accidentally napalmed by South Vietnamese planes and running naked down a road in 1972. The Tet Offensive was a military campaign launched by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces during the Vietnam War in 1968. It began on the lunar new year holiday, known as Tet, and involved surprise attacks on cities, towns, and military bases across South Vietnam. The offensive was a turning point in the Vietnam War, as it demonstrated the ability of the North Vietnamese forces to launch large scale attacks and hold territory in South Vietnam. It was ultimately a military defeat for the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces, it had a significant impact on the war's outcome. It led to a shift in public opinion in the United States against the war and increased pressure on the government to seek peaceful resolution.

Napalm girl was one the images that still perpetuate in everyone's mind, conveying the cruel decision of attacking civilians with napalm. Millions of people around the world sympathized with the girl, pointing the insignificance of the American interference in Vietnam. The public remembers selected images of the brutal nature of war that depict conflict and suffering in a dramatic manner. The vivid images on TV screens related a decade of bloody conflicts for opposed ideologies that engender bloody memories and remain in the public psyche today.

Media coverage of the Vietnam War was criticized for dividing the nation because it portrayed the military actions in Vietnam in an unfavorable light, and for showing disagreement and protest at home. Media have at times also been accused of relaying messages from 'terrorist' leaders, or have been subject to censorship aimed at preventing the circulation of such messages. In the name of national security, constraints are imposed censorship and other less obvious constraints on media coverage. However, Political and military constraints on war coverage will likely become even more controversial as international media coverage becomes more available and diverse.

Richard Nixon argues that the American failure in Vietnam and the war loss is due to complicated factors. Media coverage, according to him, prevented from understanding and grasping the ideological aim of the war through bringing the atrocities of the battlefields on TV screens as well as screen media. Thus, instead of supporting and trusting their government, demoralization and doubt about the American future ability to wage another war obsessed the Americans at home:

The Vietnam War was complicated by factors that had never before occurred in America's conduct of a war ... [T]he American news media had come to dominate domestic opinion about its purpose and conduct ... In each night's TV news and each morning's paper the war was reported battle by battle, but little or no sense of the underlying purpose of the fighting was conveyed. Eventually this contributed to the impression that we were fighting in military and moral quicksand, rather than toward an important and worthwhile objective. More than ever before, television showed the terrible human suffering and sacrifice of war. Whatever the intention behind such relentless and literal reporting of the war, the result was a serious demoralization of the home front, raising the question whether America would ever again be able to fight an enemy abroad with unity and strength of purpose at home.³

It is agreed that reporters and camera were decisive in the end, they brought the war home through TV screens. The media played an important role in ending the American interference in Vietnam to stand out the governments' plans and decisions. They brought the issue of the war to the people, before the Congress or the courts, and forced the withdrawal of American power from Vietnam. Debates soon raised over the issue of media and government; who was being more honest with the American people and about the conflicts between the media and the government.

It was widely argued that American mission in Vietnam is merely ideological through fighting Communism, however, media contradicted the more positive view of the war leader sought to project. During the Vietnam war, the relation between media and government was one of conflict since the latter took another dimension; from strong democracy to a decline of American unity and strength of purpose. Thus, talking about the Vietnam War through the American eyes was the media' view that shaped the public understanding of the war rather

than the war officials. Through protest and manifestations, the Americans expressed their disappointment with a war which was forced to an end.⁴

Instead of retaining political support, the television changed the political dynamics of the war. Samuel Huntington argues that the American political system of the 1960s and 1970s suffered from an imbalance between its governing institutions and its oppositional institutions especially media which gained power during the Vietnam era. He wrote:

The most notable new source of national power in 1970, as compared to 1950, was the national media [...] There is [...] considerable evidence to suggest that the development of television journalism contributed to the undermining of governmental authority. The advent of the half-hour nightly news broadcast in 1963 led to greatly increased popular dependence on television as a source of news. At the same time, the themes which were stressed, the focus on controversy and violence, and, conceivably, the values and outlook of the journalists, tended to arouse unfavorable attitudes toward established institutions and to promote a decline of confidence in government. ... In the 1960s, the network organizations, as one analyst put it, became “a highly creditable, never-tiring political opposition, a maverick third party which never need face the sobering experience of governing.”⁵

From the quotation above, we understand that Huntington explains how the crisis resulted from a hostility to power and authority deeply entrenched in American political culture and expressed particularly strongly by the media.⁶ Nowadays, the Vietnam war era was often portrayed as the most significant phase in the history of US journalism, because it witnessed more autonomy from the government. Before the Tet Offensive, Media was managed by the war leaders so that news coverage mostly support the American intervention in Vietnam. Media reporters relied mainly on governmental officials and the soldiers in the

battlefield. According to the Agenda-setting theory, this is priming since it refers to gatekeepers' strong ability in orienting the public's attention through news selection. The latter consists, mainly, of forwarding some events or topics at the expense of others. Later on, the crisis between the government and the media was considered as the reason behind the American waste war that preoccupied their minds.

Thus, it is the first war in the twentieth century which was covered with nearly the freedom they have covering political news at home, accelerating the media separation from the state along with other events. This step was strengthened with printing of the Pentagon Papers as a symbol of the media revolution:

It was, they all thought later ... the first moment of the [*Washington*] *Post* as a big-time newspaper, a paper able to stand on its own and make its own decisions. ... [N]ever during Watergate did [editor] Ben Bradlee have to call [publisher] Katherine Graham about whether or not they should print a particular story. If you had it, you went with it. It was the key moment for the paper, the coming of age.⁷

The media changed the war direction and Vietnam was covered differently than other wars. The press gave voice to frustration over the limited nature of the war, its civil/guerrilla war character, the incompetence of the South Vietnamese army, and the corruptness of the Diem regime. The Buddhist crisis prior to 1964 witnessed the most intensive coverage of Vietnam. On May 8, 1963, Buddhists in Hue were prohibited from flying religious flags during the celebration of Buddha's birthday. Violent confrontations started between Buddhists and the South Vietnamese government lasted six months of dramatic events. As a

proof of media policy making power, negative press coverage was used during this period since the administration supported Diem at the beginning of the crisis, and by its end actively supported a coup against him. More specifically, the press is accused of sabotaging the U. S. war effort that depended so heavily on a stable South Vietnamese government. For the first time, the American public was exposed to explicit moving images of the war that was eventually lost, which led scholars to believe that television media could have an influence on its viewers and consequently on foreign policy.⁸

It is the first time that the Americans receive the war news through television instead of reading them on newspapers and listening to the radio. Television was a novelty for most Americans at the time where it became a more prominent feature in the American living room, more and more Americans watched the evening news on one of the two main channels. This has let scholars to believe that the television news broadcasts had the power to greatly influence not only their viewers but also the government decisions as well as the foreign policy. Professor David Culbert, for example, shows that the pictures of an assassination of a Vietcong terrorist at the start of the Tet Offensive, which were shown on television on the 1st of February 1968, had the potential to change or affect viewers' responses to the war.⁹ On the opposite side, Professor Michael Mandelbaum argues against this by stating that even though Americans watched a lot of television, this does not automatically mean they absorbed the information as well as they would when reading the newspaper.¹⁰

The American Civil War had been the first war to be photographed, preparing the American public to get used to war photography by the time of the Vietnam War, rising the

issue of its influence on the American audience that was faced with moving images of a war for the first time. The press heightened involvement in the conflict area forced the American politicians to deal with the press crisis for the first time. The first president to understand the rising influence of television and the different abilities it had was President John F. Kennedy.¹¹The latter was the president in the early stages of the war; therefore, his interaction with the press is of more relevance in the development of the Vietnam War.

In the 1960's, the number of foreign correspondents in Asia was especially low and there were only a few American news bureaus overseas. Thus, the media relied on information from government officials as an effect of under representation. By denying them access to official information, President Kennedy had decided to stonewall the press. However, President Johnson shifted the approach to a new policy, known as Operation Maximum Candor.¹²The latter was adopted to make the press dependent on the government for information concerning the war. This policy according to the Johnson administration would allow the government to shape the news. The operation was based on the limited restrictions on the relationship between the press and the government as to what information was available and where the press was allowed to go. Indeed, this is framing according to the Agenda-setting theory, since it involves purposely omitting specific parts from a piece of news, or sometimes adding others to it. Both priming and framing are about the press' decisions on how to present various types of information to the public. They shed light on media's mighty capability to dictate on people how to view certain matters, or how to perceive certain influential personalities.

At that time the most images covered the combat or other military activities; there was hardly any footage of Vietnamese soldiers and citizens because producers of the news did not find this important. Transmitting the footage directly via satellite from Vietnam to America was possible but still very expensive. As the taped footage had to be transported by plane, it took couples of days, so the news programs were not able to combine a breaking story with matching footage. The images were therefore usually just used as a background to other stories.¹³ All this put the government officials in a position of power. Government officials both in Vietnam and in America had ready access to broadcast time, which gave them the ability to respond immediately to news content.¹⁴ The slow media process also gave them the opportunity to prepare these reactions. Added to that, television provided a platform for government officials to reach a bigger audience in America to explain its policy too.

Most attacks happened at night when there was not enough light to film, creating obstacles to the reporters who find difficulties filming. The guerrilla nature of the Vietnamese attacks meant that the reporters had to rely on the military to bring them to a battle location. The Tet Offensive was filmed and broadcast on the 2nd of February 1968.¹⁵ This attack surprised the American army, which caused a temporary loss of several areas. However, the American army eventually overcame their initial surprise and managed to turn the situation around. The coverage had an accelerating effect on the policy making process. Following the American victory in the Persian Gulf War, President Bush Sr. said “By God, we’ve finally kicked the Vietnam Syndrome once and for all.”¹⁶

Media scholar, Steven Livingston, describes this Vietnam syndrome as a concern that the media have the power to influence public opinion as well as support for American military missions with its coverage.¹⁷ Another factor likely to have contributed to the existence of the second CNN effect during the Vietnam War is the introduction of color television. In 1968 American television turned to color. NBC was the first channel to broadcast entirely in color, CBS broadcast most of its programs in color.¹⁸ The colorful images of fighting and the battle fields gave a more dramatic impression of the war. Battle scenes were more recognizable, posing more of an operational security threat. The viewers were more affected emotionally by evening news shows.

Though the guerilla style war strategy of the Vietcong posed practical difficulties on shooting material in Vietnam, the producers of *The Evening News with Walter Cronkite* and *The Huntley-Brinkley Report* did encourage their correspondents in Vietnam to capture as much footage of combat as possible. The main motive for this, as Mandelbaum explains, is that “combat scenes tended to be more dramatic, more exciting, and therefore - and this was the primary consideration - more likely to attract viewers than other kinds of coverage.” Therefore, the goal of the producers was to attract viewers with material that emotionally touched the audience.¹⁹

The way the government reported about the Vietnam War, specifically during the Johnson administration was another factor that led to a higher impact of the footage from Vietnam on the American audience. The American government reported positively about the war, convincing the Americans that they were winning the war. However, the Tet Offensive

showed the American audience that the enemy still had the power to fight back. Therefore, the American public was surprised to see events such as the Tet Offensive on television in which the Vietcong seemed a strong enemy, while the government gave them more positive information.

It was obvious that the television news shows were able to have an effect on the emotions of their viewers, though the footage was limited, it does not immediately mean that this influenced the decision makers to change the foreign policy. The government relied on positive public opinion as support for their foreign policy. Therefore, for the evening news to have an effect on public opinion and consequently on foreign policy, CBS and NBC had to broadcast events that were surprising and went against the expectations of the public.²⁰

After the Tet Offensive, in March 1968, the disapproval ratings had increased to 63 percent. These numbers led to Johnson's change in his warfare policy and proved that pictures and videos from the Tet Offensive had a strong effect on government decisions as well as foreign policy. However, media coverage was not the sole factor of significant foreign policy change in U.S. involvement in international conflicts. It was the effect of public opinion during and after the Vietnam War that influenced the Bush administration to change their media access policies during the First Gulf War. In controlling and suppressing the media coverage, the government was able to successfully portray a military achievement in the Middle East.²¹

From the Civil War to present day international conflicts, a large role was played by the media in providing information to the public and influencing their perceptions of wars

that the United States plays a part in. William Dorman and Steven Livingston wrote: “In American society the news media have a constitutionally guaranteed right and, therefore, we would argue, responsibility to provide information that goes beyond government publicity campaigns.”²² Thus, media coverage then has an influence on public perception and opinion and media indirectly influence foreign policy by governments through the public impressions of the conflicts as they are informed by the media, and paving the way for important policy changes based on the power of public opinion:

The mass media are the key intermediaries between citizens and their leaders, particularly with respect to policies and events being implemented far from American shores. Citizens learn virtually everything they know about foreign policy from the mass media, whether through direct personal exposure or indirectly, via conversations with friends or family members who gained their information from the media.²³

Such public opinions, when massively popular, can create political pressure and historically have influenced American leaders’ decisions involving U.S. military engagement in international conflicts.²⁴ Documentary photographer and author David Perlmutter writes:

The allegation that news images have an especially resonant ability to drive, alter, or overturn foreign policy has received currency and generated controversy since the Vietnam War. Among those who espouse such a belief are presidents, members of the foreign policy establishment, and reputable and influential reporters and pundits...Claims of powerful effects of pictures in the press, however, are so persistent and made by such influential and powerful voices in media and the political structure, that they cannot be dismissed merely as hyperbole.²⁵

Actually, media first influences public opinion, which then has the potential to affect government policies through public pressure placed on American leaders. After the Vietnam War, the U.S. military power biggest commitment was the First Gulf War of 1990-1991, new media restrictions and policy changes were introduced to assuage American public concerns of U.S. military engagement in another foreign conflict. The Bush administration was acutely aware of the negative impression on the American public from the Vietnam War.²⁶ Public opinion had a great influence on the way the administration presented the crisis in 1990-91, the diplomatic strategy the administration used leading up to the invasion, and the way the resulting coalition (of nations) ultimately fought the war itself.²⁷

The ‘Vietnam Syndrome,’ is the fact that American opposition to the Vietnam War influenced in part by the media presentation of the conflict resulted in isolationist sentiments that limited the ability of American leaders to engage the U.S. troops in future military operations overseas.²⁸ Following the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, though the majority of Americans still supported the use of the U.S. military if necessary to defend national security of the United States, they were largely skeptical regarding U.S. military operations. The overseas conflicts endured by the country left a lasting impression on American citizens who became reluctant to support U.S. military interventions. Americans worried about any conflict that commits their sons and neighbors to another dangerous effort without an achievable goal.

Media coverage through Vietnam War led to modifications in media policy and operation of military power by the government in the First Gulf War via pressure caused by

public opinion. War photography as well as Media coverage have been a large part of the attention surrounding national and international conflicts from as early as the American Civil War to the wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

The Vietnam War in the 1960s to the 1970s proved to be a turning point in journalism and U.S. foreign policy history as journalists reporting from the conflict in Vietnam had little restrictions from the government. The unprecedented access and inundation of harsh images provided to the American public marked Vietnam War as a watershed moment in “between the relatively open access by the press during all previous U.S. wars and the tightly controlled access imposed during the Persian Gulf War.”²⁹ Americans began to see the harsh truths of the violence of war and were “deeply affected by the reality of pain, fear, and anguish.”³⁰ It is said that the Vietnam War:

...marked a turning point in the way photographers [and reporters] covered war and the way they and the public thought about their work. For the first time, combat photography was perceived as being against American war policy. Earlier pictures might have read to oppose the horrors of war, but they did not challenge its justification. In the complex political and media environments of Vietnam, the antiwar movement appropriated still photos and television footage to expose the inhumanity of the war on soldiers and, especially, Vietnamese civilians. Photojournalists brought Vietnam into the nation’s living rooms as no other previous war.³¹

Americans saw for the first time photographs of their soldiers setting village huts on fire with their Zippo lighters, in addition to wounded or dead Americans and Vietnamese civilians. The Vietnam War reaffirmed the government’s old beliefs about controlling the press during war and gave rise to the American public’s opposition to the American presence

in Vietnam and objections against military engagement in similar conflicts,³² “The public’s ultimate refusal to support an extension to the U.S. military action in Vietnam was a powerful reminder to policymakers and the military that public support was in the end decisive in determining the duration of military interventionist foreign policy.”³³ The new media technology mixed with the unprecedented level of access provided to correspondents in Vietnam brought previously undocumented horrors home to American citizens through video and still photography. The 35 mm camera let photographers capture the carnage of battles and bombing campaigns. Advances in film and logistics let television crews shoot, edit, ship, and broadcast stories while they were still timely.³⁴

The American people started to rely more on the media and began to distrust the government for representation of what was happening in Vietnam. Actually, the total number of Americans killed in Vietnam surpassed the Korean War total after the Tet Offensive in March 1968, and American public support for the war decreased approximately 15 percent every time U.S. Vietnam-related deaths increased by a factor of ten.³⁵ For the first time, “it was the television which brought the war right into the American living room. Reading about death and destruction is one thing; actually seeing it with your own eyes is quite another.”³⁶ After his famous trip covering the aftermath of the Tet Offensive, Walter Cronkite, the famous American journalist, denounced the Vietnam War at the close of his broadcast on February 27, 1968 after, in which he stated:

To say that we are closer to victory today is to believe, in the face of the evidence, the optimists who have been wrong in the past. But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rational way out then will be to negotiate,

not as victors, but as an honorable people who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.³⁷

In November 1969, the American public was informed about the My Lai Massacre that happened in March 1968, known as the most shocking episode of the Vietnam War. The mass killing took place in two South Vietnamese hamlets in which American soldiers murdered hundreds of unarmed civilians, including women, children and infants. Some of the women were gang raped and their bodies mutilated.³⁸ This incident added fuel to the fire that the Tet Offensive sparked in the antiwar movement, leading to mass protests and riots across the country, notably at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

In order to decrease the American public's interest and knowledge of the war and turn attention away from Vietnam, President Richard Nixon began to limit the press's access to information from inside Vietnam itself. By holding fewer press conferences as time went on and giving more uninterrupted, prime-time speeches, the Nixon administration would "more and more try to have media without the journalists."³⁹ As U.S. military withdrawals began in Vietnam, the media began to focus on Nixon's Vietnamization policy, American and civilian Vietnamese casualties, and topics regarding American troops. Reporting of My Lai and other war crimes cases focused "attention on civilian victims of the war, and no doubt contributed to some weakening of the moral dichotomy television had set up between Americans and the enemy."⁴⁰ In 1970, only a third of Americans believed the United States had not made a mistake by sending troops to fight in Vietnam.⁴¹

The Vietnam War had a profound and lasting effect on the whole gamut of American life. It punctured once and for all the concept of American omnipotence. In spite of a massive economic and conventional military advantage, the Americans were not able to defeat their enemy.⁴² The senior military officials watched helplessly as truth was conveyed by the media and their ability to shape the public's perception of reality in Vietnam gradually faded away. In the process, the officials found their fellow status, credibility, and authority were progressively lessened.⁴³

The Vietnam War period was characterized by a split in opinion regarding the means of implementing foreign policy and highlighted the differences between and within the opinions of the public and the elites.⁴⁴ While the media's portrayal of the Vietnam War was not the sole source of negative public opinion toward the government in the 1970s and therefore not the sole reason for Nixon's policy of U.S. military withdrawal, public opinion influenced by the media became a substantial concern for U.S. military and government leaders after the Vietnam War ended. The outcome of the lingering 'Vietnam syndrome' was the U.S. government's awareness and approach to influencing public opinion in subsequent international endeavors. By the time of the First Gulf War, public opinion was a force that said not what to do but how to do it. As Bush and his advisers tried to shape public opinion through its foreign policy, public opinion actually shaped that foreign policy. Public opinion did not specifically determine the destination of the policy, but it had a lot to do with how the administration got there.⁴⁵

Two decades after the disastrous end of American intervention in the Vietnam War, providing access to journalists and photojournalists in the Middle East was adjusted by the Bush administration with the full awareness of public opinion's influence. Journalists were even threatened to cut off all media access or confiscate their visas if a reporter defied the restrictions. Militarily, even their tactics were adjusted from the Vietnam era as well. With the power of public opinion looming, President Bush "viewed it as a force he could manipulate; if he gave the public assurances of maximum safety measures and reinforcement, [the public] would be more likely to support the war."⁴⁶ Thus, to avoid the Vietnam War scenario, the Bush administration sent an overwhelming amount of military power to the Middle East which the Iraqi army was no match for.

The media played a significant role in shaping public opinion about the Vietnam war through its coverage of the conflict. There are many ways in which the media influenced the American public to call for an end to the war. As journalists and news outlets criticized government policy in Vietnam, particularly the lack of a clear strategy for victory and the mounting casualties among U.S. troops. This coverage helped to undermine public confidence in the government's handling of the war. The media gave a platform to anti-war activities, veterans, and political leaders who called for an end to the conflict. These voices became increasingly influential in shaping public opinion and mobilizing opposition of the war. The media influence on American public and protests will be studied in the following section, highlighting its role in shaping attitudes towards war, government as well as foreign policy.

Public Opinion and Antiwar Protests

While the conflict was Vietnamese against Vietnamese during the Vietnam War, the U.S. intervention was said to be promoting democracy and freedom. Many people believed in the fundamental goodness of the U.S. mission and the big story of the war was not reported until it was virtually over. In 1971, the U.S. Ninth Division killed 11,000 people in a pacification campaign named “Operation Speedy Express”, half of these were civilians and this was a mass slaughter condoned and covered up.⁴⁷ The undeniable failure of the Vietnam campaign was realized in 1975 when Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese forces, leading to a collective desire among both military personnel and civilians to move past the painful memories of Vietnam. Many thought that journalists should not have been allowed at all and tried to put the blame of defeat on war coverage.

Up to 100,000 Iraqi soldiers and unknown number of civilians were killed in the war, however, there has been little coverage in the media of the bitter aspects of the war. Instead, the coverage of the Gulf War often served as a platform for promoting new military technologies, such as the Patriot missile, which was later sold to South Korea as a result of its successful publicity during the conflict.⁴⁸ Over 500 embedded journalists in the Iraq War giving out the U.S. version from different theaters of war, reinforcing existing media manipulation practices. Embedding reporters in the Iraq War was a strategy employed by the U.S. Defense Department to avoid media triumph over the government in Vietnam. This policy restricted journalists from freely moving between military units, a freedom which reporters had during World War II and the Vietnam War. The focus of the news management

is not to reveal the true nature of the war, but to create a sense that that enough is being told. Many journalists, however, end up working as tools for the authorities, ensuring that the media war was also won by the US led forces. The media is managed to the disadvantage of the truth in order to win the war at home and internationally.⁴⁹

Following the United States bombing of North Vietnam, protests against the Vietnam War started among peace activists and leftist intellectuals at colleges campuses. These protests gained national attention in 1965 and expanded after the Tet Offensive in 1968. Antiwar demonstrations organized by groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) attracted increasing support over the next several years. The initial antiwar movements on college campuses were led by SDS members who arranged “teach-ins” to voice their objection to the manner in which the war was being conducted.

After Johnson began an increasingly aggressive air and ground war in Vietnam, the ‘hippie’ movement appeared by the end of 1965, a small but outspoken minority was making its voice heard. This minority consisted of students, prominent artists, intellectuals, and members of the counterculture movement known as “hippies” who rejected authority and embraced the counterculture. By November 1967, The Vietnam War was costing the United States some \$25 billion per year, leading to growing disillusionment among taxpayers. The increasing number of casualties in Vietnam, along with the demand for more troops by U.S. commanders, further fueled antiwar sentiments. Under the draft system of conscription, as many as 40,000 young men were called into service every month, adding fuel to the fire of the antiwar movement.⁵⁰

The largest antiwar demonstrations took place on October 21, 1967 as some 100,000 protesters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial, around 30,000 of them participated in a subsequent march to the Pentagon later that night. After a violent confrontation with the soldiers and U.S. Marshals protecting the building, hundreds of demonstrators were arrested. In 1967, the civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. expressed his opposition to the war on moral grounds. He condemned the fact that federal funds were diverted from domestic programs as well as the number of Black casualties which was not disproportionate in relation to the total number of soldiers killed in the war⁵¹

By February 1968, only 35 percent of the population supported Johnson's management of the war, while 50 percent expressed disapproval. This is due to the Tet Offensive which caused shock and discontent across the country and triggered a most intense period of antiwar protests. Many Vietnam Veterans participated in these protests, many of whom were in wheelchairs and on crutches. The sight of these men on television throwing away the medals they had won during the war did much to win people over to the antiwar movement. The Vietnam War created a deep division among Americans more than the Civil War did (1861-1865). Vietnam War protests, in combination with other 1960s movements, destroyed Americans' unquestioning faith in their government.⁵²

Draft dodging stood as one of the most controversial forms of protest. It was emerged as a contentious form of protest during the Vietnam War era, exemplified by the categorization of politicians as either hawks (war supporters) or doves (war opponents). Musicians added a tempo to which the protesters marched and chanted their rallying cries. In

1965, Tom Paxton wrote “Lyndon Johnson Told the Nation,” producing one of the first specific Vietnam War protest songs. The most powerful song was Jimi Hendrix’s 1969 rendition of the “Star Spangled Banner” at the Woodstock Music Festival. Demonstrating his exceptional guitarist skills, Hendrix incorporated sounds of war into the national anthem. Others such as Bob Dylan, John Lennon, Pink Floyd, Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Martha and the Vandellas, and Marvin Gaye gained widespread popularity for their stand against the war.⁵³

Celebrities also made an impact on the anti-war movement. Jane Fonda , daughter of actor Henry Fonda ,proved to be one of the most enthusiastic anti-Vietnam protesters. She took part in demonstrations and spoke passionately against the war during rallies; in 1972 she posed for a photograph with a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun. This action sparked backlash, with some considering it unpatriotic and labeling Fonda as a traitor, leading to her being nicknamed “Hanoi Jane.”⁵⁴

After president Nixon announced on April 30, 1970 that Vietnam War was expanding into Cambodia in an attempt to stop supplies coming down the Ho Chi Minh trail, student protests at times became violent. Protesters across different universities from Yale to the University of Wisconsin bombed and set fire to Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) buildings. At Kent State University in Ohio on May 3, protesters burned down the ROTC building. The next day, after massive unrest and protest, authorities called in police and the National Guard in an attempt to restore public order. Subsequently, police fired on the crowds, resulting in the deaths of four students and injuries to nine others.

On May 14, authorities were called to Jackson State University in Mississippi by firefighters after protesters started fires and overturned several vehicles. After a confrontation with the protesters, police opened fire on the crowd, resulting in two deaths and twelve injuries. In August 1970, four students, frustrated with the lack of government action, turned to violence. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison they bombed Sterling Hall, which housed the physics department where researchers conducted experiments for the US military and its dealings in Vietnam. The enormous car bomb inflicted tremendous damage and killed Dr. Robert Fassnacht, who was working in the building during the early hours of the morning.⁵⁵

Even amidst the violence, a significant portion of student protests during the 1960s were organized and peaceful. Non-violent student groups emerged during the 1960s, often to rebel against many of the injustices that plagued American society. In the late 1960s, student activists, particularly those facing potential military draft, protested against the Vietnam War. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) emerged in the mid-1960s as the biggest student organization. In March 1965, SDS organized a notable teach-in at the University of Michigan, where around 2,500 people participated in debates, lectures, films, and musical performances aimed at raising awareness about the unethical nature of the war. The success of these teach-ins led to the spread of the movement across the nation, with the SDS gaining widespread recognition through their involvement in sit-ins and other forms of activism.⁵⁶

Intellectuals and scholars joined the growing voices of dissent on university campuses. In 1968, Noam Chomsky's essay "The Responsibility of Intellectuals" was published in the

New York Times. In his anti-war essay, Chomsky argued that all Americans held responsibility to question the deceit and deception of the American government, but more so intellectuals due to the privilege they enjoyed. Despite their access to knowledge and freedom of speech, some of these privileged individuals supported the US government's exploitative foreign policies through manipulation and colonization. Chomsky believed that intellectuals should use their platform to uncover the truth and misinformation, leading the resistance against the Vietnam War. In line with his essay, Chomsky took a stand by refusing to pay taxes that he believed were funding the flawed foreign policies in Vietnam.⁵⁷

In 1966, British philosopher Bertrand Russell released "War Crimes in Vietnam," where he drew parallels between the atrocities in Vietnam and the Holocaust. Shortly after the book's release, Russell organized an International War Crimes Tribunal to investigate and evaluate US foreign policy. Throughout the Vietnam War, countries like South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand supported the US with troops and supplies began to remove their support ,by the early 1970s ,in response to international and diplomatic pressure for the US and its allies to end the war in Vietnam.⁵⁸

Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, for instance, promised and followed through on withdrawing Australian troops from Vietnam after winning the 1972 election. Simultaneously, as peace talks between the US and Vietnam faltered, President Nixon escalated bombing campaigns in North Vietnam. Sweden's Prime Minister Olaf Palme denounced the escalated aggression, comparing the bombings with Nazi atrocities committed during World War II. Both Russia and China threatened to reconsider *Détente*, which had

been the most successful peace negotiations of the entire Cold War. In response to domestic and international protests, the war ended in January 1973 when the US and North Vietnam signed the Paris Peace Accord.⁵⁹

Strong public opinion, in fact, whether negative or positive, directly influenced the decisions that U.S. government and military leaders made in regards to military involvement in foreign conflicts. However, foreign policy decisions made by the U.S. government and military leaders did not change because of the combined effects of American media coverage and public opinion from the Vietnam. Instead, the ‘Vietnam syndrome’ changed how the United States went about achieving their military intervention aims and how such military endeavors were presented to the public. Thus, the public opinion and pressure that occurred in part from the coverage in the Vietnam War paved the way to changes in the U.S. government’s attitude and policies regarding media access to journalists and the implementation of U.S. military actions in the First Gulf War. This shows the importance of public opinion in any military intervention involving U.S. troops abroad.

Chapter Two: Amerasians and the Third Space

It is widely acknowledged that some Vietnamese women engaged in sex work with American soldiers during the war; however, this does not represent the full range of Vietnamese women's experiences or their significant contributions to the war effort. It is important to clarify that the image of Vietnamese women in the Vietnam War as prostitutes is a harmful stereotype and not an accurate reflection of their role in the war, which was discussed in a previous section. However, it is also important to address this topic, as the connection between Amerasians and the American military presence in Vietnam during the war was deeply troubling for many Vietnamese people. The presence of Amerasians served as a tangible reminder of the war's destructive impact on Vietnamese society, which viewed them as the children of the enemy.

Women demonstrated immense courage and effective contribution to the national liberation. Their diverse experiences and contributions deserve to be recognized and celebrated in their full complexity. It is very crucial to dispel the harmful stereotypes about women in Vietnam who were portrayed by the enemy as prostitutes. Through reducing the roles of women to such stereotypes, we fail to acknowledge the complex role of women in conflicts around the world. Among the many legacies of the Vietnam War, the Amerasians served as a reminder of a painful and traumatic period in Vietnamese history, one that many Vietnamese people were trying to forget. The Amerasians or children of the enemy faced challenges in terms of identity and belonging, as they struggled to fit in with either American or Vietnamese communities. The Vietnamese government did not have specific policies to

support Amerasians, which further contributed to their marginalization and feelings of shame. In addition to the negative stereotypes and attitudes towards Americans within Vietnamese society. Complicated cultural attitudes regarding people of mixed races as well as the challenging past and lasting effects of the Vietnam War can be used to explain the feelings of shame and unease that surround Americans in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese felt ashamed about the Amerasians due to the social stigma and discrimination towards individuals of mixed race. Because purity and lineage are highly valued in Vietnamese society, people of mixed descent are frequently seen as outsiders or as not entirely belonging to either ethnic group. Both the Amerasians and their families may experience emotions of humiliation or shame as a result of this. The presence of Amerasians served as a reminder of the painful legacy of the Vietnam War and the often negative interactions between American soldiers and Vietnamese civilians. As a result, the Amerasians and their families experience shame and humiliation. Many instances of relationships between Vietnamese women and American soldiers led to the birth of Amerasian children who were considered as the outcomes of a disgraceful and occasionally exploitative relationship between the local women and the American soldiers.

Traditional values in Vietnam emphasized family honor and social status, and bringing a child with a foreigner, particularly an enemy soldier like an American, was seen as bringing shame to the family. Cultural and social norms regarding family and nationalism served as a catalyst of shame and stigma towards the children of the enemy. Added to this, the presence

of Amerasians troubled the Vietnamese since they remind them of the suffering and loss of Vietnamese civilians in a destructive war.

In Vietnam, ethnic homogeneity and conformity were emphasized to make it difficult for the Amerasians to fit into. They were perceived as outcasts or ‘others’ in a society still struggling with the consequences of the war and faced challenges in terms of language, culture, and identity. Social anxieties as well as war trauma related to the war and its aftermath was behind the stigma and shame towards Amerasians, highlighting the complex dynamics of historical, cultural, and social factors that shape the Vietnamese perspective towards mixed-race individuals and the lasting impact of the war. Occupying a third space in society ,the Amerasians do not fully belong to either the American or Vietnamese culture.⁶⁰

Homi Bhabha’s concept of the third space helps to better understand the complexity of their identities and the challenges they face. The concept explains the the unique cultural hybridity of Amerasians in Vietnam, representing a mix of American and Vietnamese cultural elements. Thus, they construct for themselves what Bhabha calls a hybrid identity merging Western and native attributes together. By struggling to fit into either society,they recognized their position as third space community. Bhabha explains, in the context of the minority’s discourses within a nation: “Minority discourse sets the act of emergence in the antagonistic in between of image and sign, the accumulative and the adjunct, presence and proxy. It contests genealogies of ‘origin’ that lead to claims for cultural supremacy and historical priority.”⁶¹

Understanding their position sheds light on the discrimination and marginalization they face in Vietnam ,as well as the complexity of their identities and the challenges they encounter.Within the third space , they continuously negotiate their identity and sense of belonging as they navigate among various cultural influences and power dynamics.This can lead to feelings of displacement, disorientation, and a lack of agency in shaping their own identities simply because they challenge the conventional ideas of citizenship, nationality, and belonging.

Amerasians must navigate both Vietnamese and American cultures while also enduring discrimination as a result of their mixed-race heritage and the historical context of the Vietnam War.Despite facing numerous challenges, they have developed their own strategies for survival and belonging, creating new forms of cultural expression and community solidarity.The concept of the third space reveals how their liminal position challenges hegemonic discourses and disrupts conventional notions of belonging and alienation.The third space, as conceptualized by Bhabha, represents a hybrid, in-between space where dominant cultural norms and identities are destabilized and new, alternative forms of identity emerge.⁶²The children themselves often faced challenges in terms of identity and belonging, as they struggled to fit in with either American or Vietnamese communities.Furthermore, the Vietnamese government did not have specific policies or programs in place to support Amerasians, which further contributed to their marginalization and feelings of shame. This lack of support may have reinforced negative stereotypes and attitudes towards Amerasians within Vietnamese society.

It must be remembered that while the United States military presence in Vietnam was substantial, the “bar girls,” prostitutes, and “temporary wives” who associated with the United States servicemen and had their babies were being generously subsidized, and were well able to support their illegitimate children. As one observer stated:

According to an estimate of a Saigon city councilman, there are 10,000 bar hostesses working in nearly 600 bars in Saigon alone. The successful ones make as much as 50,000 piasters (\$420) a month . . . (a wage) higher, in fact, than the salary.⁶³

The withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam has eliminated this source of income, leaving the women unable to afford the standard of living to which they have become accustomed. It is well within the realm of possibility that these racially mixed children will be placed in orphanages in greater numbers when this occurs, especially if the mother wishes to marry a Vietnamese man who may not be as attracted to a woman with a half-American child. In fact, while most Amerasian children are still being cared for within their families, the statistics do indicate that the number in orphanages has doubled since 1971.⁶⁴

Because of their skin color, the black Amerasians encountered discrimination as color barriers exist within the Vietnamese society itself. One additional factor to be considered in this area is the position of the South Vietnamese government. A letter written by the Minister of Social Welfare in 1971 stated:

My Ministry’s policy is not to distinguish racially mixed orphans from the others, for the former, although they are racially mixed, are Vietnamese-born citizens. Therefore, my Ministry has no intention of establishing separate

orphanages for racially mixed children for this would have a traumatic effect on them.⁶⁵

In July of 1971, the United States embassy in Saigon declared that the responsibility of American fathered illegitimate children in South Vietnam has become a matter of serious and continuing concern.⁶⁶ There were approximately twenty private voluntary agencies involved in Vietnam child care programs. Indications from A.I.D. officials are that an increasing percentage of available funds are to be channeled through these voluntary agencies rather than through A.I.D. operations as a part of the phase out of the American governmental presence in Vietnam.⁶⁷ The official position of the United States toward the Amerasian children seems to be one of growing concern and assumption of responsibility. In 1970, a Defense Department paper indicated:

The care and welfare of those unfortunate children ...has never been and is not now considered an area of Government responsibility nor an appropriate mission for the Department of Defense to assume.⁶⁸

As victims of legacy of the conflict, Amerasian children were ignored except in a few films in which the Chuck Norris fought to free these children from the communists. In *Braddock, Missing in Action III*, the Amerasians were abused by a sadistic Vietnamese officer. *The One Man Army*, Chuck Norris, chopped his way through the enemies and brought the poor victims to freedom. The film was released in 1988, the year that the Amerasian Homecoming Act was enacted, regularizing the process of admission of Amerasians to the United States. After the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, a group of American journalists were invited back to Vietnam where they were previously reported and covered

the war. The return visits took the newsmen to the streets of Saigon, where they met young men and women with very noticeable American features selling tourist items. These Amerasians lived in the streets, in makeshift shelters and supported themselves by peddling cigarettes, chewing gum, and candy.⁶⁹

Many rushed to the visitors, asking to be brought to America, the land of their fathers. Broadcasted on TV, these images moved the hearts and stirred the empathy of Americans, including Vietnam veterans who worked together to advocate their legislators for a special program to assist the Amerasians. Their stories made the Americans aware of their hardships since they grew up in a traditional Asian society that rarely accepts interracial relations. These children were treated as enemies of the new regime since they carried their fathers' racial features.⁷⁰

In 1989, it is estimated that as many as 15,000 Amerasian children grew up in Vietnam without their fathers. Many women confessed that they are not angry and they do not blame anyone because it is their responsibility. It took the United States some 7 years to acknowledge responsibility for these American citizens left behind, and 8 more years to make the immigration process a reality. Because of their fair skin or very dark skin, blue eyes, or curly black hair, they were considered as outcasts who couldn't go very far without drawing the attention of a crowd. Many consider them as casualties of the war, while others saw them as images of the old enemy.⁷¹

The first Amerasians to emigrate from Vietnam as citizens in 1982 were children of American fathers who had petitioned for them. Later, Amerasians for whom firm

documentation was not available, but who “appeared” to be fathered by Americans, where admitted as refugees. In the camps, the Amerasians suffered from mental health problems such as loneliness, depression, and anxiety. Sister Lacey compiled demographic study of the early Amerasian arrivals (1985). Her study also provided information on the mothers of Amerasians. Lacey argued that the women were not the prostitute or bargirl type that Hollywood has portrayed in their Vietnam war productions. Her survey also found numerous difficulties in the adaptation period, especially unaccompanied minors who stated that they had no desire to emigrate to the United States. When they arrive in America, they were malnourished, lacking medical and emotional care. They have experienced a shortened childhood and a quick transition into their new lives. They are confused with their sense of belonging and unrealistic hopes of reuniting with their fathers. In Vietnam, they were humiliated and called Americans, yet they were not accepted in America.⁷²

The relationships between American soldiers and Vietnamese women sometimes lasted a few years and other times for only a short period of time. Many of these fathers had their own families in the United States waiting for their return. Due to strong religious beliefs and cultural pressures, they did not end the pregnancies which were considered as accidents. The mothers of Amerasian children did not all have a suspicious background nor did they all come from the lower classes, uneducated and poor. According to Sister Lacey, these women did not deserve the labels “bargirl” or “lady of the night.”⁷³ At the time of the war, it was very challenging to secure employment in Vietnamese businesses, where the wages are low. It was very tempting to work for Americans due to many extra fringe benefits, such as having access

to the post exchange for goods, higher salaries, and befriending a high-ranking officer might provide access to facilities that were inaccessible to the regular crowd. In a country without a large industrial base, the war provided job opportunities that in other countries were available in urban factories.

Working and living in the same environment created the perfect conditions for relationships to blossom between the young servicemen who left home for the first time to live in a distant land with a foreign language and unfamiliar traditions. Amidst the feeling of loneliness, forming a friendship with someone who was compassionate was easy. Many women said that they met their American friend or husband after a period of time at work. Sometimes they met in social places such as the mess hall or the cafeteria. It is true that in the context of the traditional Vietnamese society, interracial relationships were not tolerated. However, parents were too far away to know or to care about the race of their daughters' friends who were helping to feed the family. Some of the relationships lasted as long as the tour of duty, with some fathers volunteered for a second tour, and legalizing their families. Others took further steps bring their spouses and children to the United States.⁷⁴

In Vietnam and many other Asian countries, relationships with people from different ethnicity are not encouraged. They were not tolerant towards dark complexion and entering a relationship with a person of African descent is a taboo. The Afro-Amerasians had worse experiences in Vietnam where they had to face terms such as “con den” (black kid), “con den lai” (half-breed black kid) in the classroom and marketplace. They faced enormous challenges during their teenage years and suffered a great deal of humiliation and discrimination because

of their distinctive African features. Once the Amerasians arrived in the United States, they encountered a different set of problems, looking African but not really being African. Because of language problems, they could not conduct any meaningful exchange with their African American peers who make fun of them because of they could not understand them.⁷⁵

The diverse role played by women in war and revolution cannot be ignored, from actively engaging in combat to offering support and care for their communities. Their invaluable contributions have essential to the advancement of liberation movement. The portrayal of Vietnamese women as “bar girls” or “prostitutes” during the Vietnam War is oversimplified stereotype that overlooks the complexities of their experiences and choices. During the war, women were involved in different forms of work, including sex work, as a means of survival, and economic support. However, it is not accurate to generalize the actions of a few individuals to an entire group, based on the actions of a few individuals.

In the Vietnam War, women also actively engaged in the resistance movement, frequently encountering obstacles and dangers in achieving independence and social change. The Amerasians faced a wide range of challenges in navigating their identities, such as struggles with language, belonging, and recognition. Their experiences reflect the complexities and conflicts inherent in their societies that had endured colonialism. The intersection of oppressive history and cultural interaction underscores their struggle for identity and autonomy. The third space symbolizes the Amerasians cultural resistance and evolution to create their new identities.

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GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study highlights how the American government learned from the lessons of Vietnam War on how to reshape its foreign policy and adjust its military strategies accordingly. By controlling the narrative and promoting American prisoners as heroes, the captivity narratives was an instrument used by the government to sway the public opinion and garner public support. It demonstrates how lessons learned from the Vietnam War have informed and influenced subsequent military interventions. Many of the ideas discussed in early captivity narratives are still relevant today as the captivity genre helped to construct American identity and foreign policy from the first encounter with American Indians, and still shape and reshape its decision towards their war on terror.

In the first part and second part, I discussed the captivity narratives and American exceptionalism through various texts from the Puritan period until modern time. The captivity experience is bound to the social needs, requirements, and prerequisites of a specific era within a particular timeframe. Through the variety of interpretations used by the narratives, authors aimed to explain their conditions of their captivity, manifesting in various forms, including ideology. Accordingly, both parts revolve around different interpretations of captivity narratives from various historical eras. The examination of these ideologies would account for the fact that captivity does not necessarily imply the physical alienation of the captives from their home culture. Harrowing physical experiences, however, covers the diverse range of ideologies that captivity represents.

The protestant ideology of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; mainly Puritanism, evident in Rowlandson and Mather captivity narratives, is significantly based on

viewing life from a metaphorical perspective through considering their journey to America as a spiritual redemption; in other words, it is a spiritual pilgrimage of the soul. The external life experiences serve as a way to convey the spiritual meaning intended by Providence. Essentially, these principles established religious ideological framework that shaped even the novelistic narrative of Rowlandson whose deliverance from sin is much better than deliverance from affliction. Through employing Indian narratives as self-examination instrument, they gained freedom from sins. The puritan captivity narratives were employed to propagate against the human nature of the Indians, legitimizing their extermination, revealing a political ideology underlying the consumption of these captivity narratives.

In the second chapter which deals with Barbary captivity narratives, it is clear that America was in euphoria after its independence from Great Britain. It had no time to adjust to the new political reality before the dysphoric news of imprisonment of its citizens in Algiers. They are suddenly brought back to old times, far from the democratic government. The traditional government in Algiers came as a shock to the captives whose freedom was short lived. It is no surprise, therefore, that the rhetoric of the captivity narratives was built on the contrast between the civilized America and 'inferior' Algiers. Through underscoring the superiority of their home culture reflected by the inferiority of the land of their enslavement, the captives express their cultural shock and disorientation, dramatizing the conflict between Western civilization and African barbarity. Most of the captives returned home, bringing their tales within slavery. Usually, they relied in their journals on biblical references to relate their ordeal. These references were used to depict their sufferings as

Christians within Muslim slavery. Early American culture managed and produced the Muslim Orient and gained in strength by defining itself in opposition to it. This is why the Barbary narratives of Christian-American captives say more about early-America and Western intentions regarding the Muslim Orient than they do about the actual Barbary pirates and their cultures. Their accounts were aimed to raise sympathy at home, in order to collect money to ransom them.

In Part two, the modern captivity narratives are studied and showed that the tradition that perpetuated in the previous captivity narratives continues to influence contemporary political map. Dealing with the Vietnam war in chapter one , it is clear that the captivity narratives follow the same pattern: capture by the other, persecution within imprisonment followed by their freedom. Unlike the authors of Barbary captivity narratives who were welcomed as heroes, the Vietnam War prisoners were rejected and alienated back home simply because the Vietnam war was considered as a waste war. Their narratives often talk about harsh conditions and brutality of the captors, ignoring the historical context and the reasons behind the conflict. Because of the unpopularity of the war, the narratives serve as a justification to the American interference in Vietnam to fight communism. Through portraying Vietnam as an enemy which threatens the world stability, the U.S. intervention was justified as America is associated with righteousness and democracy. Indeed, the perception of the Vietnamese as the other was based on ignorance and prejudice, as they know little about the people and their culture beyond the prison. As resilient heroes ,they wanted to share their suffering, related to Christ sufferings, in order to be a shared experience of

humanity and a national memory. The religious rhetoric aimed to justify expansion with the belief that they were divinely chosen to bring light and progress to the native Americans.

The POWs tried to explain to the Vietnamese people that they were just trying to help them, to show them a better way to live, but their bombing of the countryside proved the opposite. They tried all the means to justify their military intervention in Vietnam and pushed the Vietnamese to give up not only Communism, but all their ways of living to be Americanized. This shows that the Americans who pretend to be democrats did not believe in diversity and did not accept the Other. They were nationalists and self-centred in the 20th century when the whole world became a small village that derives its power from diversity and variety of cultures. The majority of Americans were against the Vietnam War; they even protested to denunciate the images of bombing civilians and burning villages under the name of democracy. Thus, the returning POWs found themselves out of step with the rest of the nation because the war seen as a wasted cause.

According to Jane Fonda, the POWs were lying about torture. She was furious that the POWs' welcome home and tales of abuse. The former was misinformed, according to Americans. However, media revealed all the American military operations against civilians in Vietnam. At home, the Americans, not only sympathized with the Vietnamese, but also considered them heroic people, and despised U.S. pilots as baby-burning androids. The My Lai Massacre is a proof that showcases the American policies toward civilians and Vietnam in general. Instead of helping these people, as they pretended, they bombarded and massacred them in front of cameras. Fonda also touched on the POW's fear that they would be judged

as having failed in their duties. To reinforce Fonda's denial of torture within Vietnam prisons, the American POWs released photos of prisoners enjoying medical and dental treatment, seeking vocational rehabilitation.

The second chapter deals with Somali hostage stories which took place after the American withdrawal from Somalia; in other words, after Bush war on terrorism. Though the circumstances are different, we can say that the Somali and Iraqi captivity narratives discussed in chapter three have common points. Stories of captivity in both countries align with the explicitly political concerns of the captivity tradition, defending the war as a civilizing mission and deflected allegations that Americans were barbaric invaders by directing public attention to captives whose fighting spirit and safety became the popular reason for war. Heavy media coverage was used to promote war heroes, serving their political agenda, through convincing its citizens that Somalia and Iraq are a threat to the national security. Through emphasizing American female virtue, the narratives succeeded to establish distinction between the Western women who upheld their purity and virtue and Vietnamese women who were seen as betraying the war cause through sexual affairs that led to the birth of Amerasians; the children of the enemy.

In chapter one from part three, it is clear that the American captives in the Vietnam War portrayed the Vietnamese as the other in order to convince the anti-war protesters to sympathize with them. Through dehumanizing the Vietnamese and portraying them as exotic Other, the narratives portrayed the American prisoners as heroes who sacrificed their life to help the Vietnamese in fighting communism. It is a tradition in captivity narratives for the

captive to dehumanize the capture in order to justify the American expansion and desire for more territories. In order to legitimize the war, the Vietnamese women were portrayed as victims and it is the mission of the Americans to free them from the shackles of barbarism. They were portrayed as sexual objects who betrayed the war cause, which serves to highlight the contrast with American women, who embody virtue through love and loyalty to their country while enjoying freedom at home. Thus, neglected and misrepresented contribution of the Vietnamese women is explored, seeking to overturn the American perception of the story. Through delving into the different roles played by the Vietnamese women in the war, this study presented a more balanced perspective on the conflict, emphasizing the crucial role played by women in shaping its outcomes and legacies.

From this study, it follows that food is one of the norms of cultural understanding that was behind the American prisoners' culture shock in Vietnam. It is clear that food in captivity narratives is an identity matter that separate the captives from their masters. Very often the captivity narratives refer to the fact that their masters' foodways are repulsive. The dietary regime that they are obliged to eat is repulsive not only in terms of biology but in terms of what it signifies. Eating staple foods peculiar to the Vietnamese is equivalent to an ingestion of another identity, of alienating the self from its cultural core, in other words, it is sharing the being of the captives. This ingestion of the identity of the other causes nausea in terms of biological reaction. The alienation that is one of the stages of culture shock that the captives felt is a result of the necessity to eat the food they do certainly abhor in order to survive.

From consuming to adorning the self, clothing is also another important marker of identity and class. The American prisoners were obliged to disregard their American identities as they are signified by their clothing fashion and to adopt a foreign mode of dressing. Wearing the Vietnamese clothes instead of their military suits, especially since most of them were military aviators, embarrassed the prisoners, who opposed being stripped of their rank and uniform. However, they ignored the fact that they were bound by the laws and regulations of the prison, regardless of the military background.

Thus, the experiences endured by the prisoners had intensified their feelings of alienation and trauma back home that is discussed in part two. Through understanding the reasons behind alienation, it becomes clear that the prisoners exaggerated their accounts as they chose not to assimilate; instead, they rejected everything associated to Vietnam. Differences in cultures are thus reduced to value judgements in favour of the home culture. These value judgements can only be accentuated when they are given under time-war conditions. However, in sorting out these value judgements about clothing, foodways, religious faiths, customs and government in American captivity narratives, we have to pay attention to individual psychological differences in the stereotypical visions of the captive authors. Chapter one of part four highlights that the veterans experienced double alienation, one within captivity emerged from cultural distance and judgment and the other upon returning home, which is a deeply internal and enduring trauma. For many veterans, the return home did not bring peace, but rather extended the psychological warfare they had experienced

in Vietnam. Thus, trauma and PTSD stand as lasting evidence of the captivity of the mind; a silent conflict that continued within the minds of the veterans, long after the war ended

Chapter two highlights how the alienation and trauma of the prisoners gave birth to the different forms of texts and narratives. From the early captivity narratives, writing was the healing power of expressing emotions and escape the atrocities of captivity. Without the captivity narratives that were written, the novel could have never been a literary reality. Through storytelling, the connections were fostered with others who may have gone through similar experiences, creating a sense of solidarity and shared destiny. By sharing stories, the captives can process their trauma, provide catharsis, empowerment towards the internal liberation, and understanding the postcolonial complexities. People as well as governments used this genre in order to spread their ideologies and expand imperial projects, for the novel allured many consumers to feed their hunger about the other in exotic stories of imprisonment.

In chapter one from Part five, it clear that media is one of the lessons of the Vietnam War as media from its very beginning not only influenced but shaped the minds of its users. Media images in the Vietnam War were very influential in either reinforcing or changing the foreign policy towards the war. Media coverage demonstrated the ability of media to change public perceptions and feelings about war in general and the country's involvement in war. The Vietnam War therefore marked a turning point in the nature of news coverage of war. This is yet another legacy of the Vietnam War which remains relevant today. The American perspective of the Vietnam War or American War as it is called in Vietnam can be well

illustrated through people urge to end the waste war which was on TV screen in every single American house.

The media was powerful weapon against the government in Vietnam War, shedding light on the realities of the conflict, ultimately contributing to the war to the eventual end of the war. However, in Iraq and Somalia captivity narratives media is used to promote heroes, justifying the interventions and supporting the war on terror. The strong public opposition to the Vietnam war, demonstrated through protests, became a lesson to the American government and a significant factor that is considered in subsequent war like Somalia and Iraq. This realization triggered the American leaders to recognize the importance of gaining public support before engaging in any future military intervention. Following the events of 9/11, the U.S. government successfully framed its military operations as part of a global war on terror, aiming to win the public opinion.

In the second chapter another lesson of Vietnam War is explored, highlighting the long-lasting effects through reminding both sides on war atrocities. The Amerasians were considered as a shame on the Vietnamese, reminding them of the betrayal of the war cause and reminding the Americans of a traumatic war that transformed the veterans from nation heroes to PTSD survivors. The Vietnam war is memorable and the Amerasians were seen as sons of the enemy and victims of the war. It explains how the aftermath of the war left unhealing wounds on both sides, including the Amerasians who continue to struggle with their identity, in the threshold or third space.

Revisiting the Vietnam War, it is clear that it sets itself apart from the traditional American wars. Lasting from 1955 to 1975, the Vietnam War was one of the longest wars in American history. The war was a guerilla conflict fought in jungles and countryside rather than the other American wars fought on a battlefield. The war objective was a less straightforward this time, in contrast to previous wars that had a clear enemy to defeat, leaving a profound psychological impact on veterans who felt disillusioned by fighting in a waste war. In addition to its lasting legacy, the war led to significant societal divisions that continue to shape American society to this day. This study explored how various circumstances led to widespread opposition to the war, including demonstrations and protests. The media played an important role in bringing realities of the conflict, particularly the civilians' casualties into American dining rooms through television, shifting the perception of war from entertainment to a sad reality.

This study examined how the western perspective have shaped the narratives of the war portraying the conflict as battle between Democracy and Communism, and delving in complex histories of colonialism and imperialism that have shaped the region. By deconstructing these assumptions, it is possible to more nuanced and multidimensional understanding of the Vietnam War. After the examination of the narratives surrounding prisoners of war (POWs) and their experiences in captivity, it is clear that American POWs are portrayed as heroic figures who endured unimaginable suffering at the hands of their Vietnamese captors. However, this narrative ignores the fact that many Vietnamese civilians

also suffered greatly during the war, and that the treatment of American POWs cannot be divorced from the larger context of colonialism and imperialism.

By revisiting the Vietnam War through a postcolonial lens, we are able to challenge the assumptions and narratives that have shaped our understanding of the conflict. This approach not only provides a more nuanced and complex interpretation of the Vietnam War, but also highlights the importance of considering the perspectives of all parties involved in the conflict. Ultimately, a postcolonial critique of the Vietnam War serves as a reminder of the need to critically examine dominant narratives and question the assumptions that underlie them.

The Americans in general trapped the ambitions of Man within the geographical boundaries. Thus, captivity narratives are just an instrument to convey their political ideologies and expansion. After the plight of Americans citizens in the far lands, the U.S. government became more eager expand its territories, and enlarge its projects. The experience of Vietnam veterans was a military lesson that changed in military training and reintegration programs for future conflicts. The lessons of Vietnam War's psychological and cultural struggles were used to shape the design of programs for soldiers coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan. The Vietnam war trauma had a huge effect on the military policies, through emphasizing mental health support, trauma awareness, as well as community reintegration. It transformed the way society and the military think about the war emotional consequences, through using the past trauma to shape a more stronger and inclusive future.

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ملخص:

تعيد هذه الأطروحة النظر في حرب فيتنام من خلال عدسة ما بعد الاستعمار، بهدف كشف كيف استمرت السرديات الأمريكية عن الأسر في تشكيل ودعم وإعادة إنتاج الافتراضات الإمبريالية حول فيتنام. تمثل صورة الفيتناميين محورًا أساسيًا في هذه الدراسة، التي تتناول التفسيرات المختلفة للحرب والطرق التي يتم من خلالها تصوير الفيتناميين في سرديات الأسر، وذلك بهدف إبراز وجهات نظر السكان الأصليين. من خلال إعادة النظر في حرب فيتنام من منظور ما بعد استعماري، يمكننا تحدي الافتراضات والسرديات التي شكّلت فهمنا لهذا الصراع. ولا يقتصر هذا النهج على تقديم تفسير أكثر تعقيدًا وعمقًا للحرب، بل يسلط الضوء أيضًا على أهمية أخذ وجهات نظر جميع الأطراف المشاركة في الاعتبار.

تستكشف الأطروحة كيف أن الإيمان البروتستانتية المبكر وسرديات الأسر لدى الطهريين ما زالت تؤثر في السرديات المعاصرة للأسر، بحيث تتجاوز التجربة الشخصية لتصبح أيديولوجية. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تفكيك الصور النمطية الاستعمارية المتجذرة في سرديات الأسر حول فيتنام، لإظهار كيف ساهمت هذه الصور في إضفاء الشرعية على التدخل العسكري والمشروع الاستعماري. ومن خلال قراءة جديدة تاريخية لهذه السرديات، تتبع الأطروحة تطور صورة البطل الأمريكي وتوضح كيف أن النصوص تتشكل ويُعاد تشكيلها حسب السياقات لخدمة السياسة الخارجية والأجندة السياسية الأمريكية. ومن خلال عدسة الاستشراق، يتضح أن أسرى الحرب الأمريكيين قد قدّموا أنفسهم كأبطال في مواجهة "الآخر الغريب"، مصوّرين النساء كأدوات جنسية بحاجة إلى "تحرير" لتبرير الاستعمار والتوسع. كما تبحث الدراسة في الاغتراب المزدوج للجنود الأمريكيين في فيتنام والصدمة النفسية التي عانوا منها بعد عودتهم إلى وطن تزعزعت فيه القيم الأخلاقية التي كانت راسخة لديهم، وهو ما تجلّى في اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة والشعور بالاغتراب.

وباستخدام نظرية تحديد الأجندة، تُظهر الأطروحة كيف لعبت وسائل الإعلام دورًا مهمًا في تحديد أولويات الرأي العام من خلال التغطية والتقارير التي نقلت الصراع إلى الداخل الأمريكي، مما ساهم في تحويل الرأي العام ضد الحرب وأدى إلى انطلاق مظاهرات واحتجاجات. وتُبرز كيف أصبحت تغطية وسائل الإعلام لحرب فيتنام من أهم الدروس المستفادة التي أثّرت وشكلت السياسة الخارجية الأمريكية. وتسلّط الدراسة الضوء أيضًا على أحد إرث الحرب وهو وجود "الأمريسيين" – أبناء الجنود الأمريكيين من أمهات فيتناميات – والذين يهدد وجودهم الحدود الصارمة بين المحتل والمحتل. وتقدم مفهومي التهجين والمساحة الثالثة كمفاهيم ما بعد استعمارية لفهم كيف أن أصواتهم المهمّشة تكشف كيف تترك سرديات الأسر ندوبًا اجتماعية عميقة: فهي بالنسبة للأمريكيين تذكير حي بحرب عبثية، وبالنسبة للفيتناميين تجسيد للوصمة وصراع لم يُشَف بعد. وتوضح قراءات سرديات الأسر كيف تصبح عملية "الشفاء السردية" موقعًا للصراع، حيث يسعى الأسرى لاستعادة الوكالة رغم أن الناشرين وصناع السياسات يستغلون قصصهم لخدمة أهداف جيوسياسية جديدة. تعيد هذه الدراسة تأطير سرديات الأسر باعتبارها أدوات ديناميكية للإمبراطورية: فهي ليست مجرد حكايات مغامرات بريئة، بل نصوص استراتيجية تتكيف مع متطلبات كل مرحلة زمنية، وتعيد بشكل متكرر ترسيخ فيتنام كمكان يحتاج إلى وصاية غربية.