

# UNIVERSITY-WIDE RESEARCH GRANTS FOR LIBRARIANS COVER SHEET

**NOTE:** Grant proposals are confidential until funding decisions are made.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** The applicant(s) must submit two (2) copies of their application packet. The application packet consists of the Cover Sheet and the Proposal. Applicants send 1 (one) printed copy of their application packet, with signatures, to the Chair of the divisional research committee, who forwards the packet to the Chair of the university-wide Research and Professional Development Committee. Applicants send the second copy of their application packet as an email attachment to the Chair of the divisional research committee who forwards it on to the Chair of the university-wide Research and Professional Development Committee.

<b>Date of Application:</b> 8 January 2010
<b>Title of Proposal/Project:</b> <b>Visualizing History: Remembering Vietnam on Television and in the Museum</b>
<b>Expected Length of Project :</b> <b>3 weeks of research, 6 months to write it up as a paper</b>
<b>Total Funds Requested from LAUC University-Wide Research Funds: \$3500</b>
<b>Primary Applicant</b> <b>Your Name (include your signature on the paper copy): Rachel Shulman</b>  <b>Academic Rank and Working Title: Community Outreach Services Librarian, Assistant Librarian II</b>  <b>Bargaining Unit Member/Non-Member: Member</b>  <b>Campus Surface Mail Address:</b> <b>386 Langson Library</b> <b>P.O. Box 19557</b> <b>Irvine, CA 92623</b>  <b>Telephone and Email Address: (949) 824-9826, shulmanr@uci.edu</b>  <b>URL for home campus directory (will be used for link on LAUC University-Wide Funded Research Grants web page):</b>
<b>Co-Applicant(s)</b> <b>Name:</b>

**Academic Rank and Working Title:**

**Bargaining Unit Member/Non-Member:**

**Campus Surface Mail Address:**

**Telephone and Email Address:**

**Proposal Abstract (not to exceed 250 words):**

I propose three weeks of research in three different sites – the National Vietnam Veterans’ Art Museum in Chicago, the Archives of the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington, D.C., and the UCLA Film and Television Archive in Los Angeles – to enrich research I have already.

My primary intellectual focus is on visual, historical narratives of war and its traumatic aftermath. My project brings together commemorative practices and objects, like the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington D.C., and fictional television narratives like *Magnum P.I.* into a single frame of analysis. This seemingly disparate assemblage engenders a synthetic understanding of the ways in which history is constructed by visual culture and understood beyond the boundaries of the historical academy. I argue that the impulses that led to the building of the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington, D.C. in 1982 also gave rise to a genre of television drama that originated with *Magnum P.I.* in 1980. I mobilize this argument to support a larger statement about the history that undergirds present-day public discourse surrounding both soldiers and the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This research will allow me to write an article aimed specifically at the fields of librarianship and archival studies about how libraries and, especially, archives, can function as memorials.

**Does the proposal require any of the following:**

**Use of UC Library facilities or other site(s) requiring prior approval (Yes/No): No**

**If yes, include signature and position of person authorized to permit use of facilities on paper copy of application:**

**Release time (Yes/No): 3 weeks**

**If yes, include signature(s) of person(s) authorized to approve release time on paper copy of application:**

please see attached.

**Use of Human Subjects (Yes/No): No**

**If yes, attach appropriate university form to paper application form. The process of obtaining IRB approval or a determination of exemption from subject protection regulations does not have to be completed prior to submitting your grant proposal. However, the grant cannot be awarded without evidence that the approval or exemption has been obtained.**

**List any previous grant proposals (divisional and university-wide) from this program that**

have been awarded to the primary applicant or co-applicants by title. Include date of completion and amount funded:

**Budget Summary**

**Total amount requested from LAUC statewide research funds:**

**Total amount requested from LAUC divisional research funds:**

**Other funding obtained or expected (amount and source):**

**Fiscal Year of Application (fiscal year that funding begins):**

**New Project (Yes/No):**

**Supplemental Funding (Yes/No):**

**Salaries:**

**Total Salaries:**

**Supplies:**

**Total Supplies:**

**Travel:**

Airfare

Orange County – Chicago – Washington, D.C. – Orange County	\$600
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Hotel

Chicago	\$700
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Washington, D.C.	\$700
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Travel to Los Angeles to the Film and Television Archives

Mileage: 5 trips, 98 miles round trip	\$240
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**Total Travel:**

**Other Expenses:**

Food: 21 days at \$60 per diem	\$1260
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**Total Other Expenses:**

<b>Total State-Wide Research Funds Requested:</b>	<b>\$3500</b>
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Revised 9/2006 bhg

Need for Research

I currently serve as the Community Outreach Services Librarian, but my background in History and archival work continue to inform my intellectual labor. Over the course of the past year, I have been researching the ways in which fictional television programs and artistic projects can work to serve as repositories of memory and commemorate war and trauma, performing the same functions as both archives and built memorials. While there is a body of scholarship in the fields of History and Cultural Studies<sup>1</sup> about the cultural construction of archives, the fields of Library Science and Archival Studies has not tended to focus in this area. Having completed a Certificate in Special Collections as part of my MSLIS at the University of Illinois – Urbana Champaign (2008), I am well-versed in the academic conversation about archives and special collections within these fields. A notable exception to this rule is Randall C. Jimerson, whose recent book, *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice*,<sup>2</sup> deals directly with questions of how archives and archival practices are tied into the exercise of power. Rather than being ideologically sterile spaces containing an unmediated snapshot of the past, archives are historically contingent. Because librarians and archivists are engaged in service to the public, it is incumbent upon us to think about how the materials we steward can hold and help forge meaning for those beyond the walls of the academy. This research will allow me to write an article aimed specifically at this audience on this topic.

So how is this related to television? Archives are another medium with which people interact, not only on the scholarly level that archivists have come to expect, but on the deeply personal level exhibited by the man who sees a photo of his sister in an exhibition or the woman who finds her father's letters on a visit to an archive in the hopes of finding genealogical information. These interactions are ways for people to make meaning, in much the same way that they do when watching movies and television, or visiting a memorial like the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C.

In April of 1979, after viewing *The Deer Hunter*, Vietnam veteran Jan Scruggs founded the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Fund (VVMF), with the goal of building a memorial to the American soldiers who had died while serving in the conflict known as the Vietnam War. While *The Deer Hunter* told the fictional story of what happened to a Vietnam veteran after returning home (he commits suicide), it is not inconsequential that this work of fiction inspired deep feelings in one of its viewers, feelings so deep it spurred him to an action that continues to have wide-ranging effects on American society. Interacting with fictional narratives is one of the primary ways that people make meaning out of important events in their own lives. The Vietnam War is a particularly salient example of a national traumatic event, about which hundreds of fictional film and movie narratives have been produced.<sup>3</sup> The Vietnam War ended almost 35 years ago, but the (perceived) treatment of its veterans continues to be a “hot-button” issue;

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (U. of Chicago Press, 1996) is among the best-known, as is the work of Antoinette Burton, notably *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Duke UP, 2005) and *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford UP, 2003). Other foundational works include “Can the Subaltern Speak” by Gyatri Spivak (1988), Lata Mani's *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (UC Berkeley Press, 1998) and Betty Joseph's *Reading the East India Company 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (U. of Chicago Press, 2004)

<sup>2</sup> Randall C. Jimerson. *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice*. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009)

<sup>3</sup> John K. MacAskill, *Reviews and Criticism of Vietnam War Theatrical and Television Dramas*, <http://www.lasalle.edu/library/vietnam/FilmIndex/>

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, for example, recently signed a bill designating March 30 “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans’ Day.”<sup>4</sup>

I argue that the impulses that led to the building of the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial in Washington, D.C. in 1982 also gave rise to a genre of television drama that originated with *Magnum P.I.* in 1980. In commemorating soldiers who died during the Vietnam War, both the monument and television series separate the history of the war from the soldiers, allowing a heroic narrative to be imposed. No consensus about the war’s purpose had ever been reached; nor could it be remembered as a victory or as a “just war.” Extracting soldiers from involvement in the war’s contentious history allowed for the possibility of remembering them as heroes, even if the war itself was not heroic. While the Wall individualizes soldiers in the way it deploys their names, *Magnum P.I.* focuses on one individual veteran, Thomas Magnum. In the pilot episode, Magnum works to rehabilitate the besmirched memory of a fallen comrade; this comrade is a metonym for all Vietnam veterans, who, by 1980, were understood by the American public as not having received the heroes’ welcome that they deserved. I mobilize this argument to support a larger statement about the history that undergirds present-day public discourse surrounding both soldiers and the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This discourse’s focus on individual soldiers is designed to forestall criticism of the wars themselves.

Among others, my work takes as inspiration from the art of Walid Ra’ad. In creating fake archives of the events of the Lebanese Civil Wars, he specifically calls out the ways that archives can serve the goals of commemoration. This idea led me to the Vietnam Veterans’ Museum of Art in Chicago. It is important to note that my research is not confined to an analysis of the *content* of television narratives and built memorials, but rather, to the ways in which archives that preserve the memory of the Vietnam War are, themselves, constructed. Ultimately, information preservation and how we understand information are inextricable intertwined; what an archivist decides to collect and preserve, and how she decides to arrange and describe it, all shape the work of future historians. I envision using this research as the basis for an article pitched at a professional publication about how libraries and archives perform some of the same functions as memorials, and how this understanding might impact the provision of services.

### Design and Methodology

The research I have conducted thus far led to a paper I presented at the Canadian Association of Cultural Studies Conference in October, 2009 (a longer version of the paper is attached). Because of the constraints of time and geography, I focused my analysis on a single episode of *Magnum P.I.*, readily available on DVD. My analysis of the relationship between fictional historical narratives and artistic representations of war created in the name of healing must be enriched with additional sources. I therefore propose that I undertake a week of research in each of three different places: the UCLA Film and Television Archives; the Vietnam Veterans’ Art Museum (VVAM), in Chicago; and at the Archives of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, in Washington, D.C. The Film and Television Archives will allow me to view television shows that have not been released on DVD. The VVAM is dedicated to artworks produced by veterans that deal with the trauma of war. These pieces tell stories, and I want to unpack both the stories themselves and how they are constructed. Finally, soon after the construction of the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial, people began leaving things at the wall, both

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<sup>4</sup> Patrick McGreevy, *Gov. Schwarzenegger signs bill for day to honor Vietnam veterans*, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2009/09/gov-signs-bill-for-day-to-honor-vietnam-vets-.html>.

attributed and unattributed. While Kristin Ann Hass has written about this phenomenon,<sup>5</sup> her book was published in 1998, and I am interested to learn how the offerings people have left have changed since the 2001, when the US went to war with Afghanistan.

I plan for this research to allow me to enrich the work I have already done, as well as to make a contribution to the professional and intellectual conversation within the field of librarianship. As I learn more and revise my work, I plan to propose an additional paper to be presented in an appropriate academic forum. This iteration of my research will allow me to turn my work into an article ready for publication.

**LAUC Librarians Association of the University of California**

**SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET INFORMATION**  
**This Sheet Must Accompany the Grant Application**

**PER DIEM**

Please indicate the source of the per diem rates used in the application

- a. Federal Government
- b. University
- c. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Location	Rate	Source
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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**TRAVEL**

Please indicate the source of the travel information used in the application

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<sup>5</sup> Kristin Ann Hass. *Carried to the Wall: American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial*. (Berkeley: UC Press, 1998)

- a. Federal Government
- b. University
- c. Internet Search (list which service used) Kayak.com
- d. Travel Agency
- e. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Location	Type	Amount	Rate	Source
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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

**Visualizing History: *Magnum P.I.* Remembers Vietnam<sup>6</sup>**

In April of 1979, after viewing *The Deer Hunter*, Vietnam veteran Jan Scruggs founded the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial Fund (VVMF), with the goal of building a memorial to the American soldiers who had died while serving in the conflict known as the Vietnam War. While *The Deer Hunter* told the fictional story of what happened to a Vietnam veteran after returning home (he commits suicide), it is not inconsequential that this work of fiction inspired deep

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<sup>6</sup> I am deeply indebted to Professor Amy Powell, who has not only read multiple drafts of this paper, but whose feedback has been central to its shape. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the graduate students in both UCI Visual Studies seminars I have sat in on, “Untimely Meditations” (SP 09) and “The History of Art History” (FA 09), taught by Professor Powell. Both professor and students generously welcomed me into their intellectual community. Their feedback proved most helpful as I was preparing a version of this paper to present at the Canadian Association of Cultural Studies Conference in Montreal, October 2009.

feelings in one of its viewers, feelings so deep it spurred him to an action that continues to have wide-ranging effects on American society. Interacting with fictional narratives is one of the primary ways that people make meaning out of important events in their own lives. The Vietnam War is a particularly salient example of a national traumatic event, about which hundreds of fictional film and movie narratives have been produced.<sup>7</sup> The Vietnam War ended almost 35 years ago, but the (perceived) treatment of its veterans continues to be a “hot-button” issue; Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, for example, recently signed a bill designating March 30 “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans’ Day.”<sup>8</sup>

I argue that the impulses that led to the building of the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial (commonly referred to as the Wall) in Washington, D.C. in 1982 also gave rise to a genre of television drama that originated with *Magnum P.I.* in 1980. In commemorating soldiers who died during the Vietnam War, both the monument and television series separate the history of the war from the soldiers, allowing a heroic narrative to be imposed. No consensus about the war’s purpose had ever been reached; nor could it be remembered as a victory or as a “just war.” Extracting soldiers from involvement in the war’s contentious history allowed for the possibility of remembering them as heroes, even if the war itself was not heroic. While the Wall individualizes soldiers in the way it deploys their names, *Magnum P.I.* focuses on one individual veteran, Thomas Magnum. In the pilot episode, Magnum works to rehabilitate the besmirched memory of a fallen comrade; this comrade is a metonym for all Vietnam veterans, who, by 1980, were understood by the American public as not having received the heroes’ welcome that they deserved. I mobilize this argument to support a larger statement about the history that undergirds

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<sup>7</sup> John K. MacAskill, *Reviews and Criticism of Vietnam War Theatrical and Television Dramas*, <http://www.lasalle.edu/library/vietnam/FilmIndex/>

<sup>8</sup> Patrick McGreevy, *Gov. Schwarzenegger signs bill for day to honor Vietnam veterans*, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2009/09/gov-signs-bill-for-day-to-honor-vietnam-vets-.html>.



present-day public discourse surrounding both soldiers and the two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This discourse's focus on individual soldiers is designed to forestall criticism of the wars themselves.

Vietnam continues to be invoked and evoked in public discourse surrounding the two wars in which the United States is currently engaged, in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Wall performs the rhetorical move of separating soldiers from the context of the war in which they fought so that "healing" commemoration could take place. As the VVMF wrote in the booklet calling for design proposals:

Finally, we wish to repeat that the memorial is not to be a political statement, and that its purpose is to honor the service and the memory of the war's dead, its missing and the veterans – not the war itself. The memorial should be conciliatory, transcending the tragedy of the war.<sup>9</sup>

Separating soldiers from the history of the war in which they fought emerges from the politics of the 10-15 years preceding the dedication of the Memorial. This history includes the creation of fictional television narratives, in particular, *Magnum P.I.*, which ran for eight seasons on CBS, from 1980 to 1988. The character embodied by Tom Selleck was copied again and again throughout the decade of the 1980s, constituting a relatively constant presence on the domestic landscape. *Magnum P.I.* not only employs the same rhetorical strategy as the Wall of separating soldiers from the war's history, but also, in its visual storytelling, centers the Vietnam War as a primary force in shaping the character of Thomas Magnum in ways that dislocate and dehistoricize the narrative of the war.

The pilot episode, "Please Don't Eat the Snow in Hawaii," broadcast on December 11, 1980, follows a story about a troubled Vietnam vet who suffers from Post Traumatic Stress

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<sup>9</sup> Karal Ann Marling and Robert Silberman. "The Statue Near the Wall: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Art of Remembering." Reprinted in *Historical Memory and Representations of the Vietnam War*, edited by Walter L. Hixson, (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000) (originally published in *Smithsonian Studies in American Art*, spring 1987), 128

Disorder (PTSD) and must rescue the memory of a fallen comrade. This intentional stripping of the historical memory of soldiers' experiences has political consequences: focusing on soldiers as individuals is an efficient way of diverting attention away from an actual conflict, and this memory of the poor treatment that Vietnam veterans are said to have experienced is invoked as a way to forestall criticism of our current military engagements. Our current public discursive patterns around American soldiers has its roots not only in commemorative practices that are explicitly recognized as such – like the Wall – but also in commemorative practices that are enmeshed in fictional narratives in popular culture. In arguing for understanding *Magnum P.I.* as a kind of memorial to the American military experience of the Vietnam War, I am calling for an analytic frame that sees public engagement with narratives of the past simultaneously occurring in multiple locations. The way the Wall practices memory is of a piece with the way that *Magnum P.I.* does.

### Part 1: Commemorating American Soldiers from the Civil War to Vietnam

By the middle of 1979, when Jan Scruggs was beginning to muster forces to build a memorial, there was a popular and widespread perception that GI's returning from Vietnam had been denied a hero's welcome because of the war's contentious nature at home. In addition, while at the beginning of the decade veterans had been associated in the popular imagination with the anti-war movement,<sup>10</sup> the vet had now become medicalized and perceived as mentally unstable as a result of his wartime experiences. PTSD became a recognized mental illness in the 1980 publication of the DSM III, in great part because of the activism of a number of psychiatrists and veterans. This image of a mentally unstable Vietnam veteran, combined with a

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<sup>10</sup> Lembcke Jerry Lembcke, *The Spitting Image: Myth, Memory, and the Legacy of Vietnam* (New York: NYU Press, 1998), 115

perception that the veterans of the war did not receive deserved heroic treatment, contributed to the building of the Wall. But the Wall, and, as I will show, *Magnum P.I.*, memorialize the fallen in specific ways that are also the result of strands of conservative politics.

This individualization and privatization of the memories of dead soldiers is a product of historical forces that go back to the American Civil War. Drew Gilpin Faust deeply historicizes the ways in which American soldiers who died during the Civil War were the first in the nation's history to be commemorated as individuals and buried in separate, rather than communal, graves (as they had been during the American Revolution). It also established sacrifice as the common ground around which those separated by region, politics, race, and class could unite.<sup>11</sup> And finally, the Civil War established that a soldier's death belonged to the nation, as Faust writes: "The lost life, the soldier's death no longer belonged just to that individual and his family but was also to be understood and possessed by the community – even the nation – at large."<sup>12</sup> While the commemoration of individual soldiers after the Civil War contextualized them in a history of that conflict, Vietnam era soldiers were denied this contextualization. Those who worked to commemorate the men who had died during the Civil War often framed the need to do so as a debt the nation owed them.<sup>13</sup> The creation of national cemeteries was one way to pay this debt. Their establishment "created the Civil War Dead as a category, as a collective that represented something more and something different from the many thousands of individual deaths that it comprised."<sup>14</sup> By the time of the Vietnam War, it had become assumed that soldiers who had died while serving in the armed forces would be buried in national cemeteries,

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<sup>11</sup> Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), xiii

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, 163

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 211

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, 249

and the idea that both those who had died and those who had returned constituted a group with its own identity and characteristics.

This focus on individuals within a communal, national context continued with the commemorative practices that followed both World Wars. Memorials to the Great War tended to list the names of the fallen, and after the Second World War, local memorials often simply added the names of the men who had died in that conflict to existing monuments. To be able to attach names to dead bodies, so as to recognize the sacrifice they made, came to have the utmost importance. Names were so central to the process of commemorating the dead and fallen that it necessitated the creation of a special monument for those whose remains could not be identified. In other words, if commemoration is going to be based on the fact of an individual identity, embodied by a name, then there must be a methodology for commemorating those for whom no name can be found. The idea for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was innovated in Great Britain in 1920 but was quickly adopted in the United States. It is also important to remember that for all the focus on individuals' names, these names were understood as being attached to the bodies of men who had fought in necessary wars and battles. These memorials simultaneously memorialized the noble conflict, and made the named men noble by association with it.

The ways in which the Vietnam War was remembered and commemorated is both a continuation of the type of practices innovated during the Civil War and later, as well as a departure. Names, for example, were absolutely central to the commemorative project, in both the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, and, as I will show, in *Magnum P.I.* But the national/communal connection to and with the dead, and the contextualization of the dead within a specific war and the reasons it was fought fall away from the men and women who died in Vietnam. Naming the dead was an incredibly difficult task during the Civil War, when soldiers

did not wear dog tags, and before any organized practice of collecting and burying the dead had developed. The use of dog tags began during the First World War, and the practice of identifying and repatriating all possible dead bodies began during the Korean War. Faust gestures toward a relationship between this newfound need to name the dead and a war fought over who constituted a person and a citizen.

Names were also central to the commemorative practices during and after the Vietnam War, for a few reasons. Faust's explanation also helps to explain why there might be contention over commemorating Vietnam era soldiers. The anti-war movement was part of a period of social unrest also marked by the Civil Rights Movement. Race continued to be an issue when the Wall was dedicated in 1982. That ceremony was also protested by a group called Black Veterans For Social Justice because, as their spokesperson, Brother Jay Jones, said, "When they speak of Vietnam vets, the black man is not included."<sup>15</sup>

But the legacy of racism was only one factor in this intense focus on naming the dead. An examination of conservative politics and the anti-war movement reveals another reason: naming individual soldiers can be – and was, within the space of the Wall – part of a process that removed soldiers from any national/communal context, leaving them to be *only* individuals. While other war memorials frame names with some sort of context, Maya Lin's design eschews any context beyond that of the date of death, presenting the names of the soldiers in the chronological order of their deaths. This rhetorical move followed the politics of the Right, beginning with Richard Nixon's propaganda of the late 1960s, continuing with the revision of the war's history in the late 1970s and the adoption of this revision by Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, inflecting today's discourse surrounding the two wars in which we are currently engaged. And yet, to characterize both the Wall and *Magnum PI* as simply tools of the Right is to do them

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<sup>15</sup> Phil McCombs, "Veterans Honor The Fallen, Mark Reconciliation," *The Washington Post*, November 14, 1982

both a disservice. This paper does not dispute that the Wall provides real and meaningful experiences for those who visit it, that it has helped to foster a national sense of healing with regard to the War, and that fictional accounts like *Magnum PI* were part of a larger national impulse toward coming to terms with the traumatic past of the Vietnam War. But this paper does question the cost of achieving this comfort and healing, especially in light of the fact that Vietnam is often invoked in serious discussions of our two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The United States first sent military advisors to Vietnam in 1957, seeming at the time of a piece with other Cold War era military engagements. But by 1968-69, with the Tet Offensive, the My Lai Massacre, and nightly news broadcasts that included body counts, it had become one of the most contentious issues of the day. Even before the war had ended, there was fighting over how to understand, analyze, and deploy the story of the war and the men who fought it. Nixon focused on soldiers, rather than the war, to forestall criticism of it, and used this idea in his 1968 presidential campaign: “We need a policy to prevent more Vietnams.”<sup>16</sup>

This background shaped the Nixon administration’s campaign around the POW/MIA issue that began in May, 1969. Such intense focus was placed on prisoners of war and those missing in action that it began to seem that they were the reason for fighting the war, rather than the domino theory. Nixon sought to bolster support for the war by separating the war from the men who were fighting it. The Nixon administration made the leap from POWs/MIAs to all soldiers serving in Vietnam. In other words, their rhetoric asserted, we had to keep fighting the war for the men who were fighting the war.<sup>17</sup>

If Nixon’s administration had been focused on diverting attention away from the war and onto the soldiers, Ronald Reagan’s approach to the history of the Vietnam War was to rewrite its

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<sup>16</sup> Marvin E. Gettleman, Jane Franklin, Marilyn B. Young, H. Bruce Franklin. “General Introduction,” in *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*, ed Marvin Gettleman, et al (New York: Grove Press, 1995), xiii

<sup>17</sup> Lembcke, 95

history in ways that left out significant portions. Marvin H. Gettleman and his co-editors argue in the second edition of their *Vietnam and America: A Documented History* that, while, during the war, there had been intense public focus on the long history of Vietnam and American military involvement there, by the late 1970s a revisionist stance was superceding that knowledge.

“No more Vietnams” also came to stand for the desire to expunge Vietnam from our memory. To mention Vietnam was to call up horrors, shame, guilt, rage, and a bitterly divided America and to evoke nightmares, ghosts, skeletons, bodies of Vietnamese and Americans buried or mutilated...<sup>18</sup>

Rather than a history that included the various colonial projects in Vietnam, the history of the war began with the discredited picture of the North Vietnamese invasion of South Vietnam. The “true” military history of the war had also been excised. The story of a humiliating American defeat was replaced by a narrative of the thwarting of winning generals by politicians, journalists, pacifists, and spoiled college kids.

Significant to my argument that connects wider political currents with the creation of popular culture, Gettleman, et al link this revisionism to the release of *The Deer Hunter* in 1978. They write that this film “systematically reversed the images that had been engraved on our minds by the most familiar TV and newspaper pictures of the war.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, during the war itself, television and newspaper journalists gave the public accurate portrayals of the war, but that later on fictional portrayals that fit into a forgetful narrative helped to solidify these lies in the American imagination.

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<sup>18</sup> Gettleman, et al, xiv

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*

During his presidential campaign two years later, Ronald Reagan coined the term “Vietnam Syndrome” and in 1982 described the Vietnam War as a ‘noble cause.’<sup>20</sup> H. Bruce Franklin, one of Gettleman’s co-editors, updated this analysis with his article, “‘Vietnam’ in the New American Century.” He writes that

by the end of the 1980s, the matrix of illusions necessary for endless imperial warfare was in place and functioning with potency. The two great myths – the spat-upon veteran and postwar POWs – were deeply embedded in the national psyche. What was needed next was erasure of memory of the reality.<sup>21</sup>

For Franklin, the excision of the history of the Vietnam War undergirds the rhetoric surrounding the First Gulf War in 1991, which he conceptualizes as part of the long war in which the US is currently engaged in Iraq. I extend Franklin’s argument about the removal of the history of the Vietnam War so that it includes not only *The Deer Hunter*, but also *Magnum P.I.*. While Franklin unpacks the valences of Vietnam in latter-day political and popular discourse, I focus on the specific ways in which the pilot episode of *Magnum P.I.* erases the history of the war with a focus on individuals.

The emergence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in 1980 is also part of the history of the individualization of memory. PTSD was recognized as a psychological problem in the DSM III, published in 1980. The *New York Times* ran a series of stories that characterized vets as unable to readjust to civilian life without “professional help.”<sup>22</sup> So-called “rap groups,” informal meetings of veterans getting together to discuss their experiences, had emerged in 1970. Through the efforts of a few activist psychiatrists “Post-Vietnam Syndrome” became PTSD in the DSM III, and Jimmy Carter signed a law that created the Vietnam Veterans’ Outreach

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<sup>20</sup> H. Bruce Franklin, “‘Vietnam’ in the New American Century,” in *The United States and the Legacy of the Vietnam War*, ed. Jon Roper (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: 2007), 40.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* One of the recurring myths throughout the 1980s, and seen in the *Rambo* films, was that there were still American soldiers being held as prisoners of war in Vietnam.

<sup>22</sup> Lembcke, 103



Program and designated the week of May 28-June 3 Vietnam Veterans' Week. Ultimately, while these efforts did help some vets with their trauma, it also medicalized the vet, and made the problems that any of them experienced (or were perceived to have experienced) about them and the goings-on inside their heads. Thus, by 1980, there was a popular image of Vietnam vets as mentally unstable with a possible propensity toward violence.

## Part 2: Identifying Individual Soldiers and the Illusion of History

*Magnum P.I.* debuted on CBS in December, 1980, the creation of Donald P. Bellisario and Glen A. Larsen, starring Tom Selleck in the lead role. Thomas Magnum, 35, who has recently left his position as a lieutenant in the Navy, "because I was 33 and realized I had never been 23," is living in the guest house of a world-famous and chronically absent author's Hawaiian estate. In exchange for this cushy roof over his head, Thomas provides security assistance. Having left the Navy, he has set out to make his living as a private investigator, and makes liberal use not only of the estate's Ferrari, but also expensive camera equipment, and often uses the estate to house clients whose lives he believes to be in danger. Thomas is assisted in his investigations by two buddies from Vietnam, Orville "Rick" Wright, and Theodore "T.C." Calvin. Rick now owns his own nightclub. T.C. flew a helicopter in Vietnam, and now makes his living in Hawaii in as a private helicopter pilot and tour guide. While Rick uses his ties to organized crime to get Thomas information, T.C. helps Thomas by flying him around the islands.

*Magnum P.I.* was the first fictional television drama to have a main character who suffered from PTSD, in the form of flashbacks. In this sense, Thomas Magnum fit into the medicalized, mentally unstable image of a Vietnam veteran. As played by Tom Selleck, considered a symbol of virile American masculinity by many, Thomas didn't seem to be a danger to either himself or others, despite his flashbacks. Indeed, chasing bad guys and driving

around Hawaii in a sporty red Ferrari, romancing Scandinavian stewardesses and his best friend's kid sister, supported and protected by two close friends with whom he had served in Vietnam, Thomas can be read as fairly mentally stable. Indeed, in her 1986 article, "Coming Home a Hero: The Changing Face of the Vietnam Vet on Prime Time Television,"<sup>23</sup> Lisa Heilbronn uses this characterization to praise *Magnum P.I.*, and other shows for rehabilitating the image of the vet and making their characters into heroes. But I think that such an analysis not only misses some key points that are visible in the pilot episode, it also misses the ways in which the show has evacuated Thomas' Vietnam past of all context so that it *could* make him a hero, and the ways that it makes the process of commemoration about individuals, rather than communities.

The pilot episode of *Magnum P.I.*, "Please Don't Eat the Snow in Hawaii," tells a story that parallels that of Jan Scruggs' project to build a memorial. Both are the stories of individual men who, in the face of a government that won't honor dead soldiers in appropriate ways, take the task upon themselves as private citizens. In the pilot, Thomas heads to the airport to collect old childhood friend and wartime naval comrade Dan Cook, but Dan never shows up, and is later found dead. The official report says that he died after a bag of cocaine that he was smuggling burst in his stomach, but Magnum doesn't believe it, and takes it upon himself to investigate where the Navy won't. Before his death, Dan had been working on a top-secret assignment, and Magnum suspects that the drug story is a whitewash for something else. He learns that Dan was murdered by the gold smuggler he was investigating. The smuggler turns out to be Felipe, also a member of Thomas' and Dan's team and thought to have died in Vietnam.

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<sup>23</sup> Lisa Heilbronn. "Coming Home a Hero: The Changing Image of the Vietnam Vet on Prime Time Television." *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 24-30

The bodies of both Dan and Felipe, their stories, and identifying them all play a central role within the narrative of the pilot episode of *Magnum P.I.* The injury of both bodies in the past is the trauma that forms the substance of Thomas' flashbacks. Identification of the dead bodies is one step in the process of commemorating the person. As Marita Sturken has pointed out in her book, *Tangled Memories*, the names on the Wall can be understood as placeholders for bodies.<sup>24</sup> That the memorial should contain the names of all 58,159 soldiers who had died or been declared missing was one of the stipulations of the VVMF's call for proposals.

Dead bodies and their identification show up early in the pilot episode of *Magnum P.I.*, as is illustrated by a scene that shows a conversation between Captain Cooley and Ensign Healy, both of whom are working on the investigation into Dan's death. Not only is the entire narrative about rehabilitating the memory of a soldier falsely accused of a crime, the writers contextualize his death with the deaths of other Vietnam vets by placing his body in the same morgue that identified even the "really tough cases" from the conflict in Vietnam, as Ensign Healy describes it. We see a dark corridor with a shiny cement floor, and hear the sounds of smart naval dress shoes quickly slapping it. When Healy remarks in a positive tone of voice that "Vietnam was the first time in modern warfare that every KIA [killed in action] had been identified," the captain responds with a snarl, saying that now, "There'll be no memorial built for the boys who died in Vietnam. Hippies have seen to that. The best we could expect was to have shared the glory by burying an unidentified body from that war besides the others at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. These medical examiners deprived us of that, ensign!" Chastened, Ensign Healy responds with a quick, "I, uh, see what you mean, sir."

The conversation between these two officers discursively constructs a memorial as something that is related to the naming and identification of dead bodies. A memorial names the

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<sup>24</sup> Marita Sturken, *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering* (Berkeley: UC Press: 1997), 61

dead and missing. Ironically, as if Jan Scruggs and the VVMF could hear this angry speech, they made sure that the names of dead soldiers from the Vietnam War would all be named.

Being able to attach a name to a body feels like setting the record straight, and listing the dead and missing on a public memorial – as Maya Lin’s design does – feels like the telling of history in a public place. But a list of names actually obscures more than it shows. Like the scenes of Thomas’ flashbacks (which I analyze below), with almost nothing specific to link them to the time and place of the Vietnam War, naming the dead provides only the illusion of possessing knowledge about the dead and missing. Marita Sturken writes that the Vietnam Veterans’ Memorial narrates history. The names on the wall, inscribed chronologically, she argues, constitute that history. Reading the names in chronological order allows them to create a “narrative framework”; “they chart the story of the conflict. By walking along the wall, one figuratively walks through the history of the war.”<sup>25</sup> She supports this idea by describing the way a vet could recognize a specific ambush in a set of names on a given date. She continues her explanation of how the Wall narrates history by noting that the story, as represented, is incomplete because it shows only the names of the dead and missing, not anyone else. “Only the names of the war dead and the MIA’s are inscribed on the Wall and *thus within history*” (emphasis added).<sup>26</sup>

I argue that that there is no narrative history at the Wall. If anything, it is the mere illusion of history. While history may be defined in different ways, at the very least, it tells a story about the past. The Wall lacks any sort of cohesive story. It has, instead, a list of the names of the men and women who died or went missing in Vietnam between 1959 and 1975. It does not tell us how they died, where they died, who loved them, or how old they were when they died, etc. A vet might recognize a story in a set of names, but certainly others won’t.

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<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, 62

Sturken also notes that only the names of the dead and missing are recorded on the wall, so where are those who survived within any sort of narrative?<sup>27</sup> They survived and it was messy. *Magnum P.I.* is one answer to the "what happened to those who came back?" In fact, I would argue that the memorial – which came two years after *Magnum P.I.* premiered – is actually incomplete, because it deals only with the past, with the dead. It cannot tell the stories of the living.

In *Magnum P.I.*, the audience learns the story of Thomas' service in Vietnam through four flashbacks interspersed throughout the pilot. But like the Wall, they only provide the illusion of a historical narrative. The scenes of men in the jungle are dehistoricized, dislocated, depoliticized. In other words, there is no explicit explanation, within the flashback scenes themselves, of where or when the action is taking place. Taking Thomas' memories of combat out of any discernible context goes further toward strengthening the idea that the war itself – why it was being fought – bears no significance to the project of commemorating the dead to a (seemingly) indifferent and often hostile nation. What did matter, however, were the men who had served, both those who had died and those who had returned. *Magnum P.I.* performs the same rhetorical move as the Vietnam Veteran Memorial, in making the memory of the war about individual soldiers, rather than the contentious war in which they fought.

### Part 3: Thomas Magnum Remembers Vietnam

Many remember *Magnum P.I.* as a fun action show, but even brief exposure to the pilot disabuses this notion. For all that Thomas is a masculine hero, the narrative also acknowledges that, if not broken beyond repair, he is still damaged. Evidence of Thomas' incomplete recovery from his experience lies in his seeming lack of ability to consummate (or, in later episodes) to

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

maintain relationships with women. He rejects the advances of both the spunky, girl next door, Alice, the sister of his murdered friend, as well as those of two blonde, Scandinavian stewardesses. He is still emasculated, a model of not only all men who served "over there" and came back, but also the American nation itself. This damage is due to his time in Vietnam. From the very beginning of the show, visual elements tell us that it is about a vet whose experiences not only shape how he sees and moves through the world in the present moment, but that they were the defining moments of his very being. I focus on the opening and closing credits, Thomas' flashbacks, and a scene during which he is picking someone up at the airport. Each of the four flashback scenes have their own character and narrative purpose. Some are framed with signaling music and a focus on Thomas' ring (which I explain below) and others simply appear in the middle of the story without any warning.

The pilot opens on Thomas Magnum, swimming ashore. He begins a voice-over narrative explaining that he is breaking in to an estate as part of a security check. The camera shifts from a close-up on his face to a close-up of his right hand reaching up to rub his left shoulder, on which a scar is clearly visible. On his hand he wears an insignia ring with the Cross of Lorraine, and says, "Funny the things a grown man will do for a living, but I've done funnier." We hear tinkling music that will also signal flashbacks later.

And then there is a seven second, black and white montage of war scenes, the first of the pilot's four flashbacks. We see Thomas and another man standing in the jungle, firing machine guns. Then they're coming out of the jungle, and getting shot – Thomas grabs someone – then there is a shot of a helicopter interior and its pilot, and then Thomas is helping another soldier on the ground with a gun, and then he's carrying someone, then we see a man get shot in the shoulder, and the helicopter flies off.

This first flashback is the most different from the others. It is brief – only seven seconds – and shown in a black and white, quick-fire staccato. I watched it in slow-motion several times in order to provide a summary of its action. When watched in real time, however, it feels like a visual assault. Its effect is not visual narrative – “here’s what happened in the past” – but rather a feeling of being hit with visceral images of warfare: guns going off, helicopters swooping around, men getting shot and bleeding from their chests. The narrative purpose of this scene is not to tell a story but to give the audience a sense of the chaos that is present in Thomas’ head. (Whether it is an “accurate” portrayal of PTSD is beside the point.)

This flashback is framed with a shot of Thomas’ insignia ring. This ring is also the shape through which the credits are shown. It is the Cross of Lorraine, the insignia of Thomas's unit. Rick, TC, and Dan all wear theirs. Even the villain, who turns out to be another member of their team, presumed dead, continued to wear it even as he murdered American military men. In one of the last scenes of the pilot, Thomas relieves him of it before passing out after having been shot. Throughout the episode, the camera focuses on the ring, especially as Thomas slips into his flashbacks.

Using the shape of the cross on Thomas' ring to frame the shots in the opening credits accomplishes a few things. First, it invites the viewer to see the narrative that follows through the lens of Thomas' experiences in Vietnam. In short, he is who and what he is because of Vietnam. Second, it obscures parts of the underlying images. This visual rhetoric reminds us that Vietnam has taken something from Thomas, that he is not complete or whole because he was there. It also symbolizes the idea that Thomas himself sees the world through this lens, and that parts of his vision are obscured because of the trauma he experienced. Thus, from the very beginning, Vietnam and the toll it has taken on Thomas (and, by proxy, all men and women who served there) are given a position of privilege in setting up the narrative. The ending credits also

use an image of the ring, though a static one. I read this usage as a way of saying that while it might appear at the end of the episode that Thomas is healing, as the season and the narrative unfold, Vietnam will continue to be referenced. By having the ring as the last thing the viewer sees, it reinforces the idea that Thomas Magnum is stuck, mentally, in Vietnam. Both the dialogue and the visualization of the pilot provide support for this assertion.

Thomas' second flashback is framed with the same tinkling incidental music that alerts the audience to the first one. It comes during the scene in which he learns that Dan has died. With lighthearted incidental music, we see Thomas in the guesthouse, trying to make a phone call and retrieve his binoculars so as to be able to watch the two stewardesses as they swim nude in the moonlight. When the call is connected, the scene switches to Dan's quarters, and Ensign Healy has answered the phone. Thomas asks who he is, and after he answers, the scene switches back to Thomas. There is no more lighthearted incidental music. The camera opens on a shot of Thomas' upper body, in silhouette, holding the phone to his right ear, with his insignia ring clearly visible. Ever so slightly, the camera moves in closer. The scene switches to Dan's quarters, and we see Ensign Healy again. When Thomas asks him for Dan, Ensign Healy says, "I can't do that, Magnum, he's dead." The scene switches back to Thomas. We now see a close-up of his face, shown in  $\frac{3}{4}$  view, with a phone receiver held up to his right ear. Behind him it is pitch black, and his face is shrouded in shadows, save for his ring, which gleams reflectively. "Can you hear me?" Healy asks. But Thomas is suffering a flashback. The camera still on his face, we hear the eerie, tinkling music and another voice saying, "Homeward Angel, do you read me."

The scene switches to a close-up shot of a man's hand also holding a field telephone receiver, his insignia ring almost centered on the screen. The camera moves out and brings his face into the frame. We see a man in a maroon beret, crouching on the ground, his face dirty,



and his left hand holding a telephone receiver to his ear. He says, "Homeward Angel, do you read me, Homeward Angel do you read me." The camera moves from this man to another, younger man in a black beret, holding a machine gun and chewing gum, standing on lookout. They are both in the jungle. We hear bird calls. In the distance we can see another figure approaching. The men turn in unison to train their guns on him, but soon realize that it is Thomas. His left shoulder is bandaged and blood has seeped through.

"Hi guys," he says. The man in the black beret replies, "Magnum, you're late again."

"You know Dan, I've been thinking – "

"Yeah, I know, you wanna resign."

"Well, not that I don't appreciate what the Navy's done for me. College education, foreign travel, nice uniform."

"Magnum, every time we get shot up, you wanna resign."

"You think I'm crazy, huh."

"Well, no. The only reason I'm here is 'cuz my old man expects it out of me. Felipe and Peppi, they've been fighting Charlie since they were ten."

Felipe interjects: "Eight!" [on the field telephone again] "Homeward Angel, do you read me."

Dan continues. "You've got nothing holding you. You put in your tour, you can get out."

"Can't do that."

"Why not?"

"We're a team. Can't split up the team. The only thing keeping you guys alive is me."

Dan looks back at him with an expression that indicates skepticism and perhaps weariness at having heard it all before. Thomas has what might be described as a playful expression on his face and says, conversationally, "I wonder if TC forgot to set his alarm again."

Throughout the conversation, we watch the men make their laborious way through the jungle underbrush. The scene ends abruptly and we are shown a plane touching down. Thomas' flashback is over.

The scene that follows Thomas' second flashback illustrates how the camera shows Thomas also alert us to the ways in which he is mentally stuck in Vietnam. Immediately after the second flashback, Thomas is standing at the airport, outside, watching people walking inside a glass tunnel from afar. The woman is blonde, and based on Thomas' voiceover, we assume that she is Dan's sister, Alice. The camera switches back to Thomas, who walks along behind a railing, looking concerned, and continuing to watch Alice inside the walkway. As she comes through the door, Thomas calls to her, "Alice?" As they speak, the camera is moving in the same direction as Alice, and when the camera switches back to show Thomas, we see him behind large plant leaves that evoke the jungle that was in the scene immediately preceding this one. Alice can't be more than 15 feet from him, but he can only see her through the lens of his experiences in Vietnam. It is also worth noting that the camera's perspective reinforces our understanding of Thomas as feeling apart from the society that he is supposed to have rejoined.

The third flashback is also related to his ring and is signaled with tinkling music. Thomas and Alice are back at the guesthouse, after she has retrieved Dan's personal effects from the naval base. Thomas is going through the contents of a manila envelope, and asks, seemingly casually, "Alice, where's the team ring?" "In the envelope," she replies. Thomas starts looking for it, and, not finding it, dumps the envelope out onto the coffee table in front of him. As the ring falls out and spins reflectively on the table, it is centered on the screen, the only thing in the shot. We again hear the music that signals that Thomas is about to have a flashback. As the music gets louder, we get a close-up on the ring as it stabilizes, and a clicking sound, like from a grandfather clock, is added to the music. That sound is replaced by the sound of helicopter

blades. We then have a shot of a camouflage-painted helicopter flying over the green below. The camera focuses on the pilot, T.C., as he says into his mic, “Waterbug Blue, Waterbug Blue, this is Homeward Angel. Are you guys down there?”

The scene shifts to Dan and the others on the ground, in the jungle, shooting their machine guns and running for cover. The scene shifts back and forth between shots of the men hunkering down and shooting and shots of TC in his chopper. We hear Thomas say, “Get going – I’ll cover.” We see dim figures emerging from the pinkish smoke of a smoke bomb and Thomas shooting. The scene is interrupted by Alice’s voice asking, “Did you find the ring?” and we are suddenly back in the guest house. Thomas is sitting on the couch, looking down. He doesn’t answer Alice immediately. “Are you alright, Tom?” In a quiet, distracted voice, he says, “Fine,” and retreats to the bedroom. The camera then moves to focus on the ring sitting on the table and the scene ends.

Another scene that points out how Thomas continues to see the world around him in eyes colored by Vietnam is in the scene when TC takes him up in his helicopter to go look for the gold smuggler’s ship. When T.C. comments on women in a sailboat below, “Whoa – are those women nekkid?!” Thomas admonishes him to keep his "mind on the mission." T.C. teases him about it, but for Thomas, finding the gold smuggler, who killed his friend, might as well be a mission in Vietnam. When his mind is on “the mission,” the opposite sex doesn’t matter, either.

This scene leads into another flashback. After Thomas’s reminder to “keep his mind on the mission,” T.C. turns to look out the window and when he returns to full view he is wearing fatigues and piloting a chopper. TC is trying to land so that the four men can get to him. They continue shooting but also run. As they run out of the bush, Dan is shot, but Thomas picks him up and drags him along. Felipe offers to cover them while they wade through the river to the helicopter. Thomas, dragging Dan, makes it to the chopper, while Felipe is hit in the chest. He

lies on the ground, his bloody, ring-clad hand clutching the field phone. T.C. says, “If you’re coming, man, do it now!” Felipe replies, “Too late, I’m hit.” Thomas yells, “Felipe! C’Mon!” As the helicopter flies away, Thomas yells, “Felipe, No!!!!” We watch the chopper pull away out of the camera’s view. When a helicopter returns to view, we have returned to the T.C.’s present day helicopter.

Taken together, the four flashbacks can be understood as both a continuous narrative-within-the-narrative and also discrete scenes in and of themselves. The first, black and white flashback is a montage of scenes from the other three. These, when taken together, tell a story about a formative experience that Thomas had in Vietnam, and one that has direct bearing on the present-day narrative of the pilot. We see the friendship between him and Dan, and also learn why Thomas has chosen, voluntarily, to remain in Vietnam: “We’re a team. Can’t split up the team.” Thomas is a hero because he has given up his own chance to return home to safety to protect the lives of his friends. But they aren’t just friends. We know that these war-time relationships are as strong, if not stronger, than familial or romantic ones. And it is to these relationships that Thomas cleaves in his civilian life, unready to fully reintegrate back into American life at home.

But these scenes are also deceptive. They seem to tell a story, and while they do, that story is untethered. Ultimately, this is the story of one individual – Thomas Magnum – and an experience he had while serving in the Navy in Vietnam. There is nothing in these scenes to give us any sort of real historical grounding. We don’t know when these scenes have happened, nor where, nor why. These scenes are not *meant* to tell the history of the war *because this history doesn’t matter*. What matters is that Thomas Magnum served willingly and bravely. He was a hero during the war – he saved Dan – and as such becomes a hero in the present moment

of the narrative. It is *Thomas the individual* who matters, not the war and certainly not how people at home felt about it.

In her 1986 article, “Coming Home a Hero: The Changing Face of the Vietnam Vet on Prime Time Television,” Lisa Heilbronn supports my reading that locates Vietnam as a primary shaper of Thomas’ character and others like him (like Michael Knight in *Knight Rider*, and the members of the *A-Team*). These men have been molded by Vietnam; it has given them the skills necessary to protect and defend not only themselves but the weak and defenseless who turn to them for help. It has also given them a sensibility that renders them vulnerable to appeals for their help. These men are heroes; they are able to function heroically at home because of their military background.<sup>28</sup>

I have characterized Thomas and other vets in 1980s action television shows as separated from society because of the trauma they experienced in Vietnam. They have not yet figured out how to reintegrated into civilian life and thus take on jobs that allow them to maintain this distance. Thomas is a private investigator who makes his own hours and answers to no one. Michael Knight, of *Knight Rider*, drives around in a fancy car saving people. Stringfellow Hawke, of *Airwolf*, is an independent contractor that often works for the government but does so on his own terms and only when the government needs plausible deniability. The *A-Team* operates as part of the “Los Angeles Underground” and is, in fact, on the run from the army because of false accusations. And so forth. Professor Johnson pointed out that this separation from society is a function of the detective genre.<sup>29</sup> Heilbronn makes the case that “both the fictional detective and the military have a code of behavior peculiar to their line of work. Given these similarities, it is hardly surprising that the ‘new’ detective or quasi-secret agent should prove a plausible role for the Vietnam vet. But there are differences between the classic

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<sup>28</sup> Heilbronn, 26

<sup>29</sup> Conversation with Victoria Johnson, 11/17/09

detectives and those now [i.e., in 1986, when this article was written] dominating the airwaves, and these differences are related to the use of Vietnam as a training ground for these new heroes.”<sup>30</sup> While ‘old-style’ detectives separated themselves emotionally from their work, and was often a solitary figure (even if he had employees, they were subordinates). Thomas and other characters like him, argues Heilbronn, often form emotional relationships with their clients, and work in a team in which all members are equals.

Significant to my own analysis is when Heilbronn argues that “this bonding represents a positive aspect of service in Vietnam...for the general public this presentation of strong group feeling is a novelty and is a strong contrast to the typical negative image of the vet as a troubled individual who has become an isolate as a result of his experience in Vietnam. These men, particularly in *Magnum PI* and *The A-Team*, have brought their support group home with them.”<sup>31</sup> Heilbronn’s reason for her discussion of *Magnum PI* and the others becomes clear when she delineates the ways in which these portrayals differ from earlier portrayals:

- 1) These men are not hurt (debilitated by PTSD) by their experiences, but strengthened by them.
- 2) Rather than being isolated, these men are integrated into a team.
- 3) Rather than introverted and appearing unfeeling, these men are empathetic and exhibit compassion.
- 4) Rather than criminals, these men uphold justice. Heilbronn argues that even though their code of justice may not be strictly lawful, “their adherence to this code places them above the law.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Heilbronn, 27

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 28

In Heilbronn's analysis, *Magnum PI* and other shows perform a positive function in rehabilitating the memory of the Vietnam vet as a productive member of society. I want to trouble this reading in a few ways. First, I dispute her characterization of Vietnam as a "a shaper of the positive traits looked for in heroes – their skills, their sympathy for those in distress, their code of ethics. These men are powerful precisely because they have not attempted to fit back into civilian life but have continued to function as a military unit."<sup>33</sup> Where she sees it as a positive that Thomas and the others have not fully integrated into society, I read this lack of reintegration as evidence of damage caused by trauma. Indeed, if a reliance on a homosocial unit were a goal to which these characters should aspire, the last episode would not end with Thomas reenlisting in the Navy and achieving a form of heteronormativity in taking on responsibility for his daughter, while Rick gets married and T.C. reconciles with his estranged wife and children.

#### Part 4: The Political Consequences of Individualizing Soldiers

When the VVMF (using only private donations, and no government funds) set out to build a memorial to the men and women who had died while serving in the American military during the Vietnam War (1959-1975), the booklet outlining the rules for the competition ended by asking that submissions not engage with politics. Certain parts of the history of the war had to be unmentioned so that the memory could be reconstructed in a way that could promote healing. Maya Lin has said, herself, that she chose to ignore the history of the war and the protest surrounding it, in the name of creating a space in which healing could occur. Leaving the war and the conflict surrounding it unmentioned, however, means that these two central parts of the history of the war have been allowed, in national memory, to become forgotten.

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 30

## Coda: Current Images of Dead American Soldiers and the Individualizing Their Memory

In September of 2009, the Associated Press (AP) released a photo of a dying American soldier in Afghanistan, against the wishes of his family, backed up by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates. In a letter to the AP, Gates wrote:

Why your organization would purposefully defy the family's wishes knowing full well that it will lead to yet more anguish is beyond me. Your lack of compassion and common sense in choosing to put this image of their maimed and stricken child on the front page of multiple American newspapers is appalling. The issue here is not law, policy or constitutional right — but judgment and common decency.<sup>34</sup>

My purpose in quoting this letter is to demonstrate how American soldiers are individualized in present day discourses on war. Both implicitly and explicitly, the specter of Vietnam hangs over and colors public discourse on these two wars. Images are central to our understanding of the wars we are currently fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. And yet, photographs of returning bodies have been banned, and in the instance cited above, even images of dying soldiers, if not censored by the government, are highly discouraged. With his invocation of “judgment and common decency” Gates seeks to separate this individual soldier from the context of his death. Rather than seeing this image as an integral part of the journalistic coverage of the war in Afghanistan – the war is a public event and its coverage is part of public discourse – Gates has framed this image as a private event, the individual death of another individual's son. The AP seeks to inform the public about the war, as is, indeed, their job as a news organization. But the Obama administration, following Bush's lead, has chosen, instead, to insist on the framing of the

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<sup>34</sup>David W. Dunlap, “Behind the Scenes: To Publish or Not,” *New York Times*, September 4, 2009



memories of our dead soldiers as both private and individual. Their deaths can neither be visually represented as part of the highly politicized wars in which they fought, nor even as members of a national community. Rather, they are individuals who will be mourned by their families, and it is their families, not the nation, who has the ultimate say over the use of their images.

Commemorating soldiers as individuals began in the United States with the Civil War. That focus on individuals became even more intense with the commemoration of Vietnam veterans. The history leading up to these commemorative practices must include a focus on the ways in which visual narratives also commemorate the past, and in so doing, craft specific versions of history. To understand the present-day conversation about American military engagement overseas, we must look to the history that undergirds this conversation. Soldiers are individualized today because of the contention surrounding the Vietnam War, and the intentional forgetting of the past that supported the forms that commemoration of Vietnam veterans took. History matters, however. True democratic discourse depends on our understanding how we got to our present positions.

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- \*Heilbronn, Lisa. "Coming Home a Hero: The Changing Image of the Vietnam Vet on Prime Time Television." *Journal of Popular Film & Television* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 24-30
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<sup>35</sup> Cited works are denoted by an \*.

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- \*McCombs, Phil. "Veterans Honor The Fallen, Mark Reconciliation," *The Washington Post*, November 14, 1982.
- \*McGreevy, Patrick. *Gov. Schwarzenegger signs bill for day to honor Vietnam veterans*. <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/lanow/2009/09/gov-signs-bill-for-day-to-honor-vietnam-vets-.html>
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- Roper, Jon, Ed. *The United States and the Legacy of the Vietnam War*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: 2007
- Schubert, Rikke, Fabian Virchow, Debra White-Stanley, and Tanja Thomas, Eds. *War Isn't Hell, It's Entertainment: Essays on Visual Media and the Representation of Conflict*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2009
- \*Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, The AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley: UC Press, 1997
- Sumser, John. *Morality and Social Order in Television Crime Drama*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1996
- Selizer, Barbie. *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998



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January 29, 2010

To Whom It May Concern

I will grant Rachel Shulman 3 weeks of leave to allow her to pursue the research she has proposed in her application for a LAUC Research Grant. I reserve the right to grant leave at such times as will have the least impact on departmental operations.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cathy Palmer".

Cathy Palmer  
Head of Education and Outreach  
University of California, Irvine Libraries

## **Rachel Shulman**

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### **Curriculum Vitae**

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#### **EDUCATION**

##### **MS 2008, including a Certificate in Special Collections**

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), Graduate School of Library & Information Science (GSLIS)  
Coursework in Archives & Special Collections, Youth Services, Reference, Cataloguing

##### **MA 2007**

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Department of History  
Supervisor: Antoinette Burton  
Major field in Modern Britain and Empire, minor fields in Colonialism and Gender and Modern European Jewish History  
Three years of related coursework and passed preliminary exams for Ph.D.

##### **AB 1999**

**Bryn Mawr College**, Bryn Mawr, PA  
Advisor: Sharon Ullman  
Major: History  
Minors: English, Hebrew & Judaic Studies, Concentration in Feminist & Gender Studies  
Senior Thesis: *The Imperial Mission of the English Schoolgirl Novel, 1886-1914*

##### **Visiting student, 1997-1998**

**University of Edinburgh**, Edinburgh, Scotland

#### **EMPLOYMENT**

##### Libraries

**Librarian, Department of Education and Outreach, University of California, Irvine, Irvine, CA, December 2008-present**

- Coordinate UCI Libraries SPIRIT Program (Schools Partnering in Research & Information Technology), including bibliographic instruction for students in grades 7-12
- Serve on reference desk at Langson and Science Libraries

- Liaison Librarian to Humanities Core, Writing 39C, and First-Year Integrated Program
- Design and provide Bibliographic Instruction for Humanities Core, Writing 39C, and First-Year Integrated Program

**Graduate Assistant, American Library Association Archives, University Archives, UIUC, Urbana, IL, February-August 2008**

- Reference and research services, both onsite and via email
- Design processing strategies, process incoming materials, including description and arrangement, and create and edit finding aids

**Hebrew Language Collection Development Consultant, UIUC History Library, Urbana, IL, February 2008 (unpaid)**

- Researched appropriate materials to support Hebrew Language instruction

**Librarian, Sinai Temple, Champaign, IL, August-December 2007**

- Readers' advisory and reference services
- Supervised and trained volunteers
- Assisted teachers with choosing relevant materials for their curricula
- Wrote policies for collection development, circulation, and donations
- Selected, catalogued, and processed all new acquisitions

### Writing

**NEH Grant Consultant, Illinois State Geological Survey, Urbana, IL, June-July, 2006**

- Modified existing text and created new text for an application for an NEH grant to support the digitization and preservation of over 11,000 depression-era aerial photographs of Illinois.
- Applied expertise gained as a Ph.D. candidate in History to craft an argument for value of a project of the State Geological Survey to the humanities.

**Technical Writer, Computer Sciences Corporation, Cambridge, MA, January-June 2002**

- Wrote Manual for FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) violation tracking software.
- Wrote online help using RoboHelp.
- Attended needs-assessment meetings with client.

**Marketing Writer, Ximian, Inc., Boston, MA, December 2000-May 2001**

- Shaped image of company through online and printed materials.
- Wrote collateral for use at tradeshow and in press packets, including boilerplate for press releases.
- Served as informal "verbal consultant" to all employees.
- Copyedited press releases. Created and maintained both text and HTML on website.

### Teaching & Other Assistantships

#### **Teaching Assistant**

**History 141: The History of Western Civilization to 1715**, Spring 2007

Dr. John Lynn, Professor of History, UIUC

**History 142: Western Civilization 1660 to the Present**, Spring 2006

Dr. Mark Micale, Professor of History, UIUC

**History 171: United States History to 1871, Fall 2005**

Dr. Vernon Burton, Professor of History UIUC

- Led three weekly discussion sections per semester
- Developed syllabi including policies and procedures relevant to managing the course
- Chose primary source material to complement professors' lectures and textbook assignments
- Assessed all student work and assigned final grades
- Created Excel spreadsheets to calculate final grades

### **Grading Assistant**

**Religious Studies 108: Religion & Society in the West**, Fall 2007

Dr. Bruce Rosenstock, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, UIUC

**Library & Information Science 202: Social Aspects of Information Systems**, Spring 2007

Dr. Lori Kendall, Assistant Professor of Library and Information and Science, UIUC

**History 241: The History of Ancient Rome**, Fall 2006

Dr. Ralph Mathisen, Professor of History, UIUC

- Graded papers and exams
- Created Excel spreadsheets to calculate final grades
- Tracked attendance

**Graduate Research Assistant to Dr. Kristin Hoganson**, Professor of History, UIUC, Summer 2003

**Graduate Assistant to Dr. Clare Crowston**, Director of Graduate Studies and Associate Chair, History Department, UIUC, 2002-2003

### **AWARDS AND HONORS**

**Center for South Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (FLAS)**

For the study of the Middle East and Hebrew language, UIUC, 2007-2008

**Named to the Incomplete List of Excellent Teachers**, UIUC, Spring 2006

**Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry, Graduate Research Award**, Brandeis University, 2006-2007

**Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Judaic Studies Visiting Scholar**, Oxford University, 2006-2007 (*declined*)

**Karacik Award for Research Abroad, Program in Jewish Culture and Society**, UIUC, Summer 2005

**Pre-Dissertation Travel Award, Department of History**, UIUC, Summer 2005

**European Union Center FLAS Fellowship**

For the study of the European Union and German language, UIUC, 2003-2004, 2004-2005

**European Union Center FLAS Fellowship**

For the intensive study of German at the Goethe Institut – Prien am Chiemsee, Germany, June-July 2004

**Verdell Frazier Young Memorial Award**, UIUC, 2002-2003

**Goethe Institut – Boston Stipendium**

For eight weeks of intensive German language study, Boppard, Germany, July-August 2002

**Richmond Lattimore Prize for Best Poetic Translation**

For Horace's "Carmines V," from the Latin, Bryn Mawr College, May 1996

#### **PAPERS DELIVERED**

**“Visualizing History: *Magnum PI* Remembers Vietnam”**

*Canadian Association of Cultural Studies*, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, October 2009

**“Colonizing Palestine: The Imperial Task of Anglo-Jewry, 1871-1895”**

*Jews, Empire, and Race*, Parkes Institute, University of Southampton, England, July 2005

**“English/Jewish: The Colonization of Palestine in *The Jewish Chronicle*, 1871-1895”**

*Imagining Jewish Modernities*, Jewish Studies Graduate Student Association Inaugural Colloquium, UIUC, April 2005

**“English/Jewish: The Colonization of Palestine in *The Jewish Chronicle*, 1871-1895”**

*Jewish Studies Workshop*, UIUC, March 2005

**“The Colonization of Working-Class Children and the 1904 Interdepartmental Committee’s Report on Physical Deterioration”**

*Childhood and the State – The State of Childhood*, Society for the History of Children and Youth Conference, University of Maryland – Baltimore County, Baltimore, June 2003

#### **PUBLICATIONS**

“Imagining Jewish Modernities: Reflections on a Graduate Conference in Jewish Studies in the Midwest” *Perspectives: The Newsletter of the Association for Jewish Studies*, Fall/Winter, 2005, co-authored with Jennifer Young

#### **PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES, AFFILIATIONS, AND SERVICE**

**Librarians Association of UCI, Academic Librarianship Committee**, Member, October 2009-

**UCI Libraries Short Definitions Task Force**, Member, June 2009-

**American Library Association**, Member, Jan. 2009-

**Association of College and Research Libraries**, Member, Feb. 2009-

**California Association of Research Libraries**, Member, Feb. 2009-

**UCI E-Portfolio Committee**, Member, 2009

**UCI Libraries Training and Organizational Development Committee**, Member, 2009-

**Curriculum Committee**, GSLIS, UIUC, M.S. Representative, Nov. 2007-April 2008

**Center for Children’s Books**, UIUC, Volunteer, Feb.-May 2007



Jewish Studies Graduate Student Association, UIUC, **Co-President, 2004-2006**

**Co-Coordinator**

- **Inaugural Graduate Student Colloquium, *Imagining Jewish Modernities*, 10 April 2005**

- **Fall Colloquium, *Studying Jews, Studying Europe*, 30 October 2005**

Graduate Student Advisory Committee, **Graduate College, UIUC, Member 2005-2006**

History Graduate Student Association, **UIUC, Secretary, 2004-2005**

**Association for Jewish Studies**, Member, 2004-2007

Fifth Annual Graduate Symposium on Women's and Gender History, **UIUC, Finance Committee, 2003-2004**

**Society for the History of Children and Youth**, Member, 2003-2004

#### LANGUAGES

**French**, reading proficiency

**German**, reading and speaking proficiency

**Hebrew (Modern and Biblical)**, reading proficiency