

2013

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Roundtable Review

www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables

Volume XV, No. 7 (2013)

14 October 2013

Roundtable Editors: Thomas Maddux and Diane Labrosse

Roundtable Web/Production Editor: George Fujii

Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux

Introduction by Michael Stewart Foley

Heather Marie Stur. *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780521762755 (hardback, \$90.00); 9780521127417 (paperback, \$27.99).

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XV-7.pdf>

Contents

Introduction by Michael Stewart Foley, University of Sheffield.....	2
Review by Justin Hart, Texas Tech University.....	6
Review by Meredith Lair, George Mason University.....	9
Review by Edwin Martini, Western Michigan University.....	13
Review by Kara Dixon Vuic, High Point University.....	16
Author's Response by Heather Marie Stur, University of Mississippi.....	20

Copyright © 2013 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online.

H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for non-profit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author(s), web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For other uses, contact the H-Diplo editorial staff at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

Introduction by Michael Stewart Foley, University of Sheffield

Heather Marie Stur's *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era* is a highly original and pioneering book, joining the recent work of Meredith Lair, Seth Jacobs, Kara Dixon Vuic, Andrew Huebner and others in making plain the permeability of boundaries between the American home front and the war zone.¹ We have been long overdue for an ambitious account of gender and the Vietnam War, particularly one that pays attention not only to American women, but to Vietnamese women and GIs, too. Stur reminds us of the powerful hold that the John Wayne-style of American masculinity had on the whole nation during the Cold War, and that it of course extended to the combat zone; but more than that, Stur does well to demonstrate the challenge to – and breakdown of – that myth under the strain of day-to-day life in Vietnam.

The subtlety and ambition of Stur's analysis draws overwhelming praise from the reviewers writing for this roundtable. On the whole, they like Stur's use of a wide range of sources, her accessible prose, and her "compelling," "insightful," and "innovative" analysis. In general, they praise Stur's skillful recovery of the ways in which, in Meredith Lair's words, "Americans in the war zone embraced various ideas about gender that framed and justified the violence of the war itself," and did much to determine the experiences of both American and Vietnamese women. In Stur's examination of the Red Cross Supplemental Recreational Activities Overseas (SRAO), for example, "Donut Dollies" brought the complicated tensions of gender and race dynamics from the home front – where those dynamics were working themselves out in sometimes dramatic fashion – to the battle front. And as Kara Dixon Vuic notes in her review, the process worked in the other direction, too, when combat zone sensibilities challenged home front mores – as when women "who expected to serve cool drinks and engage in small talk" ran up against expectations of "soldiers who assumed the women had come to offer another kind of service."

More than that, Stur's analysis reinforces Loren Baritz's work in demonstrating the centrality of ethnocentrism, not so much in fueling the overconfidence of American policymakers (as Baritz argues), but in shaping Americans' views of the Vietnamese in their own land – seeing Vietnamese women, for example, sometimes as 'damsels in distress' and other times as 'dragon ladies.'² Among the reviewers, there is some difference of opinion on Stur's analysis of such evidence. Justin Hart wonders how typical or atypical these perceptions were in the history of American war-making. And although Vuic sees Stur, for example, making "significant strides toward a long overdue study of the military's role in

¹ Meredith Lair, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Seth Jacobs, *The Universe Unraveling: American Foreign Policy in Cold War Laos* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Kara Dixon Vuic, *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); Andrew Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

² Loren Baritz, *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did* (New York: William Morrow, 1985).

facilitating the [prostitution] industry,” Lair wishes that Stur had organized the book more around certain types of behavior – including rape and prostitution – as instruments of war, instead of focusing primarily on American perceptions of race and gender. Edwin Martini, meanwhile, wishes Stur had done more to extend her analysis to postwar discourses of “victimization for Vietnam veterans” as well as “the systematic erasure of Vietnamese images and voices from American culture” after the war.

Taken together, however, these reviewers seem largely in agreement that *Beyond Combat* goes a long way toward opening up new approaches to studying the experience of the American war in Vietnam that others may follow. As each of the reviewers points out, Stur’s work is part of a growing literature that places gender at the center of our analysis of American diplomacy, and it is hard to imagine any future work on the United States’ once-longest war not engaging those themes and questions.

For my own part, I had hoped for a little more discussion among the reviewers of what it seems to me are obvious political and moral implications of the diffusion of ethnocentrism and misogyny from home front to combat zone. That such ideas were promoted and counted upon by those in power was, perhaps, unsurprising; that they were so thoroughly absorbed by so many civilians and men and women in the armed forces, however, may say something about the wider pathologies of American culture. And that some military men and women came to resist those ideas may say something else about the enduring values of justice and equality, even out on the hostile front lines of war. The point is that in examining constructs of racial supremacy and misogyny in the war zone, Stur reveals (without making it explicit) some of the key components of any militaristic society; she also shows that some Americans – antiwar GIs and veterans, for example – rejected that militarism. How do we account for both the tolerance and rejection of those instruments of militarism?

Maybe it is worth thinking about American combat zones as borderlands or, at the risk of introducing the loaded term ‘empire’ into the discussion, as frontiers of empire – in the same way that archaeologists write about the Roman Empire and the manner in which Roman legions facilitated the diffusion of economic and cultural ideas and structures to distant outposts.³ Perhaps we hesitate to use the term ‘frontier’ out of deference to Frederick Jackson Turner, but the standard definition used by social scientists – “a zone of interpretation between two previously distinct peoples”⁴ without regard to formal geographic or political borders – would seem to apply to encounters in a war zone.⁵ Lair

³ See, for example, Hugh Elton, *Frontiers of the Roman Empire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Michael Fulford, “Territorial Expansion and the Roman Empire,” *World Archaeology* 23:3 (1992): 294-305.

⁴ Leonard Thompson and Howard Lamar, “Comparative Frontier History,” in Lamar and Thompson, eds., *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 3-13.

⁵ The historian and archaeologist Bradley J. Parker distinguishes “borderlands” as referring “to regions around or between political or cultural entities – the geographic space in which frontiers and borders

hints at this concept in her own work, writing that “the Nam was like a frontier boomtown where the imperatives of basic survival – whether real or imagined – allowed Americans to rationalize discarding civilization’s quaint notions about modesty, adultery, brutality, and due process.”⁶ But we know enough about the American public’s reception of stories of brutality and lack of due process – from My Lai to Guantanamo – to know that the unhinging of the American moral compass (and the rationalizing that typically accompanies it) occurs not merely in the laboratory of the combat zone. That is, rationalizing the abandonment of morality on the borderlands of war happens just as much, if not more often, at home. We would do well, therefore, to track more deliberately the diffusion of cultural ideas and attitudes between the home front and combat zone frontier. In the same way that Bernd Greiner has systematically linked responsibility for American atrocities in Vietnam to the highest civilian officials, we need to find a way to measure the culpability (or lack thereof) of the wider American culture in the diffusion of misogyny and racism to the combat frontier.⁷ Such a task seems especially urgent in light of the recent shocking revelations on the scale of sexual violence in today’s American military.

It is a testament to the originality of Stur’s work that it prompts these and other questions raised in the reviews that follow. I am privileged to introduce the reviews of Justin Hart, Kara Dixon Vuic, Edwin Martini, and Meredith Lair, followed by Heather Stur’s response.

Participants:

Heather Marie Stur is the Nina Bell Suggs Endowed Professor and assistant professor of history at the University of Southern Mississippi, where she is also a fellow in USM’s Center for the Study of War & Society. Her first book, *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2011, and she is the author of articles on the Women’s Army Corps in Vietnam, Vietnamese refugees, black women’s responses to the Vietnam War, and the influence of Bob Dylan on international protest music during the Cold War. During the 2013-14 academic year, Dr. Stur will be a Fulbright Scholar in Vietnam. She will be affiliated with the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh City, where she will advise faculty on curriculum

are likely to exist,” but then accepts that both borders and frontiers can occur within borderlands. See Bradley J. Parker, “Toward an Understanding of Borderland Processes,” *American Antiquity* 71: 1 (Jan 2006), 77-100. I am not a borderlands expert, but to me, this seems like so much splitting hairs; I am happy to follow the lead of cultural anthropologists who have more readily applied the borderlands metaphor to a wider variety of cultural, economic, political or military encounters occur. See, for example, Robert R. Alvarez, Jr., “The Mexican-US Border: The Making of an Anthropology of Borderlands,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995), 447-470; Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,” *Cultural Anthropology* 7:1 (Feb 1992), 6-23.

⁶ Meredith Lair, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 176.

⁷ Bernd Greiner, *War Without Fronts: The USA in Vietnam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

development in U.S. history and international relations, and also teach a course on U.S. diplomatic history. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Dr. Stur will conduct archival research and interviews for two book projects -- one on Saigon intellectuals and the development of a South Vietnamese national identity, and one on the fall of Saigon and its aftermath. Dr. Stur holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Michael Stewart Foley is Senior Lecturer in American History at the University of Sheffield. He is author of *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (UNC Press, 2003) and *Front Porch Politics: the Forgotten Heyday of American Activism in the 1970s and 1980s* (Hill & Wang, forthcoming in September 2013). He is also a founding editor of *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*. Starting in September 2013, he will be Professor of American Political Culture at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands.

Justin Hart is Associate Professor of History at Texas Tech University. He is the author of *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2013) and "Making Democracy Safe for the World: Race, Propaganda, and the Transformation of U. S. Foreign Policy during World War II" (*Pacific Historical Review*, February 2004), which received the James Madison Prize of the Society for the History of the Federal Government and the W. Turrentine Jackson Prize of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association. He earned his PhD at Rutgers University, where he worked with Lloyd Gardner.

Meredith Lair is an associate professor in the Department of History and Art History at George Mason University. Her book, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War*, was published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2011.

Ed Martini is associate professor of history and associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Western Michigan University. He is the author of, most recently, *Agent Orange: History, Science, and the Politics of Uncertainty* (Massachusetts, 2012), and the co-editor, with Scott Laderman of *Four Decades On: Vietnam, the United States, and the Legacies of the Second Indochina War* (Duke, 2013).

Kara Dixon Vuic is associate professor of History at High Point University. Her research focuses on the connections between gender, war, and militarization in the twentieth-century United States. She is the author of *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), and is currently writing a history of the military's utilization of women in entertainment programs for American soldiers from World War I through contemporary wars in the Middle East.

Review by Justin Hart, Texas Tech University

Heather Stur has written a wonderfully compelling, wide-ranging, yet concise study of women and gender in the Vietnam War era. Her work bridges the fields of military history, cultural history, the history of U.S. foreign relations, and the history of women and gender. It engages and adds to the literature on women and war, gender and U.S. foreign relations, race and gender in the military, and the history of the antiwar movement. I expect that it will be widely used in graduate and upper-level undergraduate courses; I am already thinking about how to use it in my own courses.

Because *Beyond Combat* ranges across so many genres and addresses so many subjects, it is difficult to summarize briefly. But, essentially, the book examines how ideologies of gender structured the ways in which the United States viewed its military mission in Vietnam, while also explaining how those same ideologies conditioned responses to the presence of U.S. women in that conflict, as well as the experiences of those women. There is a long opening chapter on the dualistic, highly gendered nature of American perceptions of Vietnam, which oscillated between the Orientalist staples of the ‘dragon lady’ and the ‘damsel in distress.’ Subsequent chapters focus on Red Cross “Donut Dollies,” nurses and Women’s Army Corps personnel, conceptions of masculinity among male soldiers, and the intersection of the antiwar movement’s critique of Cold War masculinity with the women’s liberation movement in the United States. Each chapter offers a perceptive read of conventional and not-so-conventional sources, provocatively juxtaposing the familiar with the unfamiliar.

Indeed, one of the most admirable aspects of the book is its eclectic combination of archival sources, government publications, the popular press, GI antiwar newspapers, memoirs, oral histories, and secondary sources. On page 56, for example, Stur moves seamlessly from an article in *Stars and Stripes* to a document from the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech to an article from a popular periodical to an interview she did with an Air Force mechanic. Few books demonstrate this sort of range in the types of sources they draw upon. The author’s engagement with historiography is also impressive. Although there is not a book precisely like *Beyond Combat*¹, Stur wades into a rich and extensive literature in many of the fields that she addresses. The seminal work by Cynthia Enloe and Robert Dean, among others, on gender and U.S. foreign relations receives much attention; so, too, the many studies of domesticity and the Cold War, such as Elaine Tyler May’s classic *Homeward Bound*; she also manages to engage the voluminous literature on women’s wartime experiences (on all sides of the conflict), soldiers’ experiences in Vietnam, the antiwar movement, and the political and military history of the war itself.²

¹ The closest, as Stur acknowledges in the introduction (5), is probably Susan Jeffords’ *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

² Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women’s Lives* (London: Pandora, 1988); Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Elaine Tyler May,

Beyond Combat is especially good at explicating and deconstructing the gendered paradoxes of the U.S. experience in Vietnam. There is a very insightful read of American images of Madame Nhu (the sister-in-law of Ngo Dinh Diem, the President of the Republic of Vietnam from 1955-1963), which focuses on the ways that her efforts to restrict U.S. soldiers' sexualization of Vietnamese women challenged the machismo at the heart of the U.S. mission. Other examples include an examination of the contrast between official government literature that depicted U.S. soldiers as 'gentle warriors' committed to saving the Vietnamese people from communism at the same time that U.S. soldiers played the role of sexual aggressor, exploiting Vietnamese women in the sex trade while destroying the country the soldiers were assigned to protect. Meanwhile, Red Cross 'Donut Dollies' and female nurses were expected to play the role of the 'girl next door' even though their decision to go to Vietnam testified to their rejection of that gender ideal. There were also the soldiers who joined the antiwar movement and found their masculinity questioned for criticizing the sort of machismo that they blamed for leading the United States into foolhardy military expeditions in the first place. The many contradictions of the American War in Vietnam look particularly, if not uniquely, acute when viewed through the prism of gender.

As with any good book, the author provokes more questions than she can reasonably answer within the scope of a discrete study. Along these lines, I would have liked for Stur to have spent at least a bit more time addressing the typicality of the Vietnam War. I often found myself thinking about how many of the issues she discusses—whether the machismo of the soldiers' approach to war, the implications of the presence of women in a war zone, or the gendering of the war project itself—are true of any war, not just Vietnam. The nature of her argument seems to suggest that many of these issues are particular to Vietnam, though she does not really develop that case. The one exception to this trend—and it is an important one—is the way that the GI antiwar movement intersected with the women's liberation movement in the United States, leading soldiers to develop a gendered critique of the conceptions of masculinity that were so clearly central to the American mission in Vietnam. However, even this connection is more implied than interrogated or theorized. One wonders whether the extremely common phenomenon of antiwar sentiment among soldiers has ever before (or since) generated a critique of machismo, or whether that was a unique product of the climate of the 1960s. Likewise, I wonder whether female nurses and Red Cross volunteers in previous wars felt similar tensions between how soldiers and officials saw them and how they saw themselves. Was their rejection of the role of the 'girl next door' simply a product of the budding feminist movement in the United States, or was this a common experience among women in a combat zone? (A related issue that might be worth exploring in the forum is the relationship between female and male nurses in Vietnam, which receives surprisingly little attention.)

Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era (New York: Basic Books, 1999); for thumbnail sketches of the various historiographies that Stur engages, see the excellent footnotes in the Introduction.

To be clear, none of these questions invalidate Stur's major arguments or conclusions. Her subjects still experienced what they experienced. Addressing the typicality of the Vietnam War would simply allow us to pinpoint how many of these experiences were a product of the times and how many apply equally to other wars. Even without this comparative dimension, however, Stur's very fine book is a model for how to do this type of analysis with any modern war. If, as I suspect, it will inspire similar future research on other wars, then it will serve yet another important purpose.

Having taught the history of the Vietnam War for nearly fifteen years, I have noticed that my students share an as yet unwavering fascination with the war's folklore, especially the unique and varied ways that Vietnamese people harmed Americans. The most lurid of these tales concerns Vietnamese prostitutes secreting razor blades in their genitals in an effort to literally eviscerate American manhood. The story comes up every semester without fail, usually from a male student who sheepishly wonders 'if it is true.' The story's power rests on age-old fears of female sexuality, but also on terrible assumptions about Vietnamese people, namely that they are sadistic and treacherous to an extreme degree—not coincidentally, the same degree that would justify their extermination in an open-ended campaign of violence like 'search and destroy.' In the story, the prostitute's body becomes another front in the American effort to contain communism, and the soldier's body is reduced to a weapon uncomfortably inadequate to its task. Ultimately, the story's persistence in the American imagination suggests anxiety and ambivalence at the intersections of gender, race, and violence in the Vietnam War, an area of inquiry scholars are only beginning to address.

In *Beyond Combat*, the Vietnam War's *vagina dentata* myth is but one of many fascinating anecdotes that Heather Stur skillfully unpacks as she examines how American concepts of gender serviced the war effort. Stur's book goes beyond recuperative studies of women's roles in the war, most recently represented by Kara Vuic's excellent *Officer, Nurse, Woman*,¹ to consider how Americans in the war zone embraced various ideas about gender that framed and justified the violence of the war itself. *Beyond Combat* is a fine addition to a robust and growing literature, exemplified at its best by Amy Greenberg's *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire*, Kristin Hoganson's *Fighting for American Manhood*, and Mary Renda's *Taking Haiti*, that considers constructions of gender alongside the quest for resources and the projection of national power as the animating motivations behind American military interventions abroad.² Stur's work is ambitious in making claims about the evolution of American conceptions of masculinity and femininity that will resonate not just with Vietnam War scholars but also with scholars of American social and cultural history in general. *Beyond Combat* is also a worthwhile read for its utility, for it includes accessible prose, a welcome return to footnotes, and brisk contextual treatments of the Vietnam War's history that make the book suitable for classroom use.

Stur imagines the Vietnam War as a "complex web of personal encounters between Americans and Vietnamese" that were "shaped by a cluster of intertwined images that

¹ Kara Dixon Vuic, *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The US Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

² Amy Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Americans used to make sense of and justify intervention and use of force in Vietnam” (2). She organizes her book into five chapters that each address a different facet of these encounters—American perceptions of Vietnamese women, the role of American Red Cross volunteers, the role of female American military personnel, gender’s role in shaping the violence of the ground war, and shifting discourses of masculinity at work in the antiwar movement. Stur’s focus remains squarely on American perceptions of each group, but the book has a curious lack of symmetry in the stories it tells and those that remain unaddressed. For example, Stur does not often distinguish between the perceptions of American men and those of American women, who likely had their own thoughts on Vietnamese women and the gendered and often sexually degrading roles they played on U.S. bases in South Vietnam. Also, despite the book’s subtitle, which emphasizes “women and gender” but not men, the book nonetheless has a great deal to say about perceptions of American masculinity—and almost nothing to say about perceptions of Vietnamese masculinity. For example, Vietnamese culture allowed for a greater degree of public affection between men than American culture, forcing the U.S. military to educate its soldiers not to be offended by the sight of two Vietnamese men holding hands. A more thorough examination of American perceptions of Vietnamese masculinity would be a worthwhile addition to the book, though Stur delivers more than enough insight on the other groups she discusses, and she should be commended for examining constructions of both masculinity and femininity in a transnational context.

The heart of Stur’s research lies in deconstructing the dominant tropes that defined Vietnamese women and American women and men. In “Vietnamese Women and the American Mind,” Stur examines competing images of Vietnamese women as sexually threatening dragon ladies, whose dangerous vaginas continue to fascinate American undergraduates, and fragile damsels in need of rescue and protection. In “She Could Be The Girl Next Door,” Stur examines Red Cross volunteers, whose presence in the war zone offered American soldiers a reassuring reminder of home. “Wholesome, girlish, chaste,” Stur writes, these young women were “the antithesis of the mysterious dragon lady,” but also potent symbols of the nation’s virtue (3). “We Weren’t Called Soldiers, We Were Called Ladies” focuses on nurses and soldiers in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC). Like their Red Cross counterparts, these women challenged traditional women’s roles by volunteering for military service in Vietnam, but they bristled at regulations and cultural expectations that they make themselves sexually appealing and available to American men. Military authorities regarded nurses and WACs as morale boosters for the troops, which only compounded the physical and emotional challenges they faced in their work. In “Gender and America’s ‘Faces of Domination,’” Stur turns to the experiences of American men. She finds three archetypes of American masculinity at work in Vietnam: the “gentle warrior” who was tasked with delivering aid and comfort to disadvantaged Vietnamese people; the “gunslinger” who meted out death to the enemy; and the sexual aggressor, who took advantage of the rampant prostitution created (or at least exacerbated) by South Vietnam’s devastated wartime economy. Finally, Stur considers new modes of masculinity proffered by antiwar veterans in “Liberating Men and Women.” This chapter examines the perspective of antiwar veterans who recognized the link between gender inequality and imperialism and whose political activism challenged the misogyny inherent in U.S. military culture.

While *Beyond Combat* does an admirable job weaving these disparate threads into a convincing and coherent whole, I noticed two conceptual weaknesses. First, while *Beyond Combat* does go 'beyond combat' in discussing the Vietnam War, it is ambivalent on the subject of whether American women experienced combat, at times stating that they did, then qualifying that assertion by extending the definition of combat to include witnessing its gory aftermath (15, 106-07, 122, 131, 133, 211). In seeking to lionize women for the material sacrifices they made by serving in Vietnam, Stur subtly asserts that combat was the dominant experience of the war for American men. It was not. Not surprisingly, then, the vast majority of women who served in Vietnam did so out of harm's way, as the infinitesimally small number injuries and deaths among American women demonstrates. Second, Stur treats sexual violence and exploitation by American men towards American and Vietnamese women almost as an afterthought. Sexual assault was the greatest danger American female military personnel faced in Vietnam, yet Stur makes only passing mention of this fact (133-34). She also goes easy on American men who patronized Vietnamese prostitutes, allowing Vietnam veterans' rather self-serving antiwar argument that military authorities used prostitution to control American soldiers to stand without challenge (191-92). A bolder move would have been to organize the book less around the perceptions of American actors and more around their behavior, with an entire chapter on rape as an instrument of war against the Vietnamese and an instrument of control over American women who overstepped traditional gender roles by going to Vietnam in the first place.

Beyond Combat should be lauded for its ambition, but there are also some occasional problems with its sourcing. This kind of work walks a fine line between describing the historical fact of social relationships at a given time and describing perceptions of those same social relationships. Without corroboration of primary source material, an author can yield, perhaps unwittingly or unwillingly, to the flawed and biased perceptions of those same groups she seeks to examine. In Stur's case, she relies on American government sources to *describe* Vietnamese gender roles while at the same time interrogating American perspectives *of* Vietnamese gender roles, using the same set of sources for both projects. For example, in describing the role of Vietnamese women within the family, Stur cites a 1967 U.S. Government Printing Office *Area Handbook for South Vietnam* and a 1968 pamphlet published by USAID, but she references no scholarship on Vietnamese social relations that would contextualize the extent to which American perceptions were accurate or misinformed (30-31). Admittedly, Stur is addressing Vietnamese women in the American imagination, but by not providing any guidance from scholar specialists in this area, the reader is left to understand Vietnamese gender roles only according to non-scholarly western sources. This sourcing problem is realized in a slightly different way when Stur describes antiwar GI newspapers' critiques of basic training—a sweeping generalization that it was brutally gendered—as evidence of the historical experience of basic training, without providing any corroborating scholarship that would substantiate (or challenge) the critique (188-89).

When weighed against the creative, careful work Stur does throughout her text, these problematic passages are minor flaws in an otherwise wonderful book. *Beyond Combat* is important not just for appreciating how gender animated the U.S. war effort in South

Vietnam but also for understanding how the Vietnam War influenced American ideas about gender in general. As Stur writes, “what Vietnam did was challenge accepted images of masculinity, while not completely overturning them” (238). The Vietnam era also witnessed the expansion of opportunities for women in the military, which contributed to the expansion of accepted images of femininity. Stur closes her book with consideration of women’s roles in the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars, which still range from nurturing caregivers to victims of male aggression. Perhaps, when these wars are discussed in some future book or classroom, students will inquire about a mythology that immortalizes women not as the malicious vamps I referenced at the start of this essay, but as dedicated and effective warriors soldiering for their cause.

The last decade or so has seen the arrival of many important works that have demonstrated the need to consider gender as a central category of analysis in the history of foreign relations. Among many key texts, Mary Renda's *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism*, Robert Dean's *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy*, and Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination* stand out as building upon the important, pioneering work of Elaine Tyler May, Emily Rosenberg, and Cynthia Enloe.¹ With *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era*, Heather Stur has positioned herself in the company of these and other scholars who have explored the intersections of gender, race, identity, and foreign relations, helping to offer greater insight into how and why the United States engages in foreign conflict abroad.

In this important work, Stur argues that gender constructions were central to the ways in which the Vietnam War was prosecuted and understood at the time, not just at the level of policymakers (as Robert Dean has shown), but by men and women on ground in non-combat situation. Drawing on an array of sources that include official military records from the National Archives, published government sources, and an impressive range of contemporary cultural sources, Stur argues that gendered interactions on bases, in brothels, and in everyday life during wartime were "shaped by a cluster of intertwined images that Americans used to make sense of and justify intervention and use of force in Vietnam" (2). Even those scholars who are habitually skeptical of more "cultural" approaches to foreign relations will be hard pressed to argue otherwise when they examine the volume of evidence Stur is able to marshal in support of this argument. These constructions, she shows, "were invoked to mobilize citizens for the war effort" but also "played a role in humanitarian endeavors by U.S. troops in Vietnam" (3).

In her opening three chapters, Stur surveys the various images and tropes of women that framed the majority of interactions during the war. Beginning with the fascinating "Vietnamese Women in the American Mind," she shows how Vietnamese women were regularly cast either as "damsels in distress," in need of protecting by strong, masculine Americans, or as "dragon ladies," objects representing both desire and danger to U.S. troops (3). Stur's discussion of Madame Nhu, the sister-in-law to Republic of Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem, is particularly instructive in showing how "American perceptions of Vietnamese gender were intertwined with attitudes grounded in Cold War sexual anxieties and deep-seated Orientalist images" (31). Against this racialized construction of

¹ Mary Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Christina Klein's *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination* (University of California Press, 2003). Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (Basic Books, 1999); Emily Rosenberg, "Foreign Affairs After World War II: Connecting Sexual and International Politics," *Diplomatic History* no. 18, vol. 1 (Winter, 1994); and Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (Pandora Books, 1988).

Vietnamese women, American women were often presented as “the girl next door” (65). Paying close attention both to ‘Donut Dollies,’ Red Cross volunteers who provided support and morale to U.S. troops, and to veterans of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), who served in a variety of roles, Stur demonstrates the complex ways in which both the women in these programs, and the men they ostensibly volunteered to help serve, made sense out of the gender politics of the time, which both shaped and were shaped by the war that surrounded them. For each of these different images, Stur argues that the constructs “reflected gendered, ultimately patriarchal beliefs about national security and America’s duty to weaker people and nations. The images illustrate how popular home-front beliefs about men’s and women’s appropriate roles were deployed in U.S. policies towards Vietnam, reflecting what American thought about themselves, and about the U.S. position in the world” (5).

Chapter Four, “Gender and America’s ‘Faces of Domination,’” is in my view the least original in the book. As she did in the far more groundbreaking opening chapter for female troops, Stur outlines and surveys the three dominant gender tropes for male U.S. troops in the war: the gentle warrior, a humanitarian caregiver who looked after Vietnamese children and families; the gunslinger, modeled upon John Wayne-inspired masculinity and Manichean Cold-War ideas of good and evil; and the sexual predator, built up through basic training to inflict the most violent forms of patriarchal aggression on a variety of women. Stur does well to connect these images of U.S. servicemen back to the female categories she describes in chapters one and two, showing how they were mutually constitutive: the gentle warrior was there to protect damsels in distress, the gunslinger fought on the front lines to protect the girls back home, and the sexual predator preyed and at times was preyed upon by the dangerous dragon ladies. Still, the chapter as a whole covers ground that will be familiar to most readers, lacking the originality and innovation that comprises the first two chapters. The final brief section on the Winter Soldier investigation that documented atrocities committed by American troops in Vietnam, for example, reads more like an afterthought than a well integrated component of her larger argument.

In chapter five, however, “Liberating and Women,” Stur quickly returns to form, providing a fascinating look at the ways in which men and women from a variety of backgrounds and with a variety of positions with respect to the war attempted to turn Cold War gender norms on their heads, actively resisting the most pernicious gender constructions outlined by Stur along with the war that relied on, and reinforced them. In this chapter, Stur explores the GI coffeehouse culture of the period, in which GIs (and many of their ‘girls back home’) explicitly rejected the ‘sexist’ and ‘chauvinistic’ language they saw as being critical to the training of U.S. troops and to the prosecution of the war in general. WAC veterans were also actively involved in challenging the gender constructs of the period as they related to the war. But the most intriguing section of the chapter deals with how African-American veterans, both male and female, negotiated the even more complicated terrain to racial and gender oppression, in which, according to Stur, “the situation was complicated by what were widely understood as ongoing attacks against black masculinity.” Framed against the backdrop of the Great Society, the 1965 Moynihan report, and the paternalistic liberal racism that often informed much of both, Stur demonstrates how the efforts of black veterans resulted in “a sometimes chaotic mix of political cultural

approaches in which black GIs, asserting their manhood, raised their voices alongside black women in the military and black civilian women who urged their brothers to join in revolutionary action against all forms of oppression” (200). Shur’s innovative analysis of this largely unexplored story not only systematically dismantles the hollow paternalism of the Moynihan report (which urged African-Americans to join the military with the hopes that it would prepare them for increased employment opportunities, only to find the unemployment rate for black veterans at 25% in 1973), but also brings together nicely the various strands of her narrative (237).

In doing so, this section points to one of the most important strengths of the book – that in paying close attention to gender, Stur is not only careful not to use it as a substitute for ‘women,’ but consistently interrogates the complicated intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and social class. Something often discussed but not often enough accomplished by gender historians, this is no small feat. Stur’s book provides an excellent model of how future scholars might pursue similar questions with the required attention to the intersections of complex identities.

The only significant piece of the story I wish Stur had done a bit more with would be to have more explicitly charted the process by which Cold War gender constructs, which were first reinforced and then challenged by U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia, only to be largely reconstructed in the 1980s, helped give rise to discourses of victimization for Vietnam veterans. In her conclusion, she surveys the uneven legacies of gender and the Vietnam War for women, gays, and lesbians wishing to serve in the military, but also how the war engendered a narcissistic focus on “what Vietnam did to us” (238). Stur hints in her conclusion that “what Vietnam did was challenge accepted images of masculinity while not completely overturning them” (238), but surely the focus on what the war did ‘to us’ could not have been accomplished without the systematic erasure of Vietnamese images and voices from American culture during the late 1970s and 1980s. Similarly, Vietnamese women and voices, so prominent in Stur’s early chapters, disappear in the later sections of the book, returning the focus to gender roles that were constructed within a largely domestic cultural context.

These are, however, minor concerns in an otherwise outstanding book. Innovative and original in its approach, rich and rigorous in its attention to detail, *Beyond Combat* marks the arrival of a new and important scholarly voice in Vietnam War studies.

Beyond Combat offers an insightful and wide-reaching study of the Vietnam War that foregrounds gender in the war's inception and military policies, the experiences of the Americans who fought it, and the images of the war that were seen by the American public. Heather Marie Stur has written a lively read, full of compelling analysis, interesting sources, and new interpretations. The conflict, she convincingly shows, was "not just as a military maneuver, but also...a complex web of personal encounters between Americans and Vietnamese that took place in the hothouse environment of war" (2). Although primarily a study of the ways gender contextualized Americans' experiences in the war, the book also examines how these conventions framed the relationship between Americans and the Vietnamese who labored in their bases, businesses, and brothels.

Stur begins her work by examining the ways in which the U.S. public and policymakers viewed the country of Vietnam and the conflict waged there through the "lenses of gender and race, seeing a land and a people that were at once alluring and dangerous" (18). Based on her analysis of State Department memoranda and communications, as well as popular magazine and press coverage of the region, Stur argues that Vietnamese women symbolized both the rationale for, and the dangers of, waging war in Southeast Asia. While Stur deftly explains the ways American rhetoric framed U.S. interests in the region, in part as an attempt to protect Vietnamese women and impose American-styled gender roles, she also reveals how the American war effort effectively targeted women and disrupted the family life it ostensibly sought to protect. Most notably, this unfortunate conflux of gender and war played out as the American presence disrupted Vietnamese life and forced countless women into cities where they frequently labored on U.S. military bases or in brothels catering to GIs' sexual appetites. In this environment, many South Vietnamese also came to see the conflict as a war of gender, one in which the traditional *ao dai* symbolized the country's effort to retain its culture in the face of American influence, while the miniskirts donned by bar girls and hostesses reflected all the negative consequences of the American presence.

In her examination of the ways gender shaped American justifications for the war, Stur contributes to a growing scholarship that originated with Joan Scott and Cynthia Enloe's calls to consider the relationship between foreign policy, wars, and gender.¹ Recent works by the historians Naoko Shibusawa, Petra Goedde, Donnah Alvah, Melani McAlister, and Kelly Oliver, for example, point to the tangible ways that cultural and gendered ideologies have framed the United States' political relationships in the post-World War II era, while Loren Baritz and James William Gibson apply this analysis to the war in Vietnam.² Stur's

¹ Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

² Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Petra Goedde, *GIs and Germans: Culture, Gender, and Foreign Relations, 1945-1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Donna Alvah, *Unofficial Ambassadors: American Military*

focus on the ways gender informed American policymakers' understanding of Vietnam also bolsters the work of Kristin Hoganson, Robert Dean, K.A. Cuordileone, and Andrew Rotter, who maintain that concerns about masculinity pushed American policymakers to pursue an aggressive foreign policy during the twentieth century.³ Stur's examination of the Vietnam War not only extends this historiographical trend, but also makes a clear case for why it matters.

Gender ideologies framed the ways American women and men participated in and understood the war. And while Stur documents the experiences of women whose involvement in the war is less well known—in this regard, her attention to the Women's Army Corps (WAC) is particularly revealing—she also engages in a deeper consideration of the disconnect between the Cold War-inspired images of women that justified their presence in the war and the realities of their lives in the clubs, hospitals, and bases where they worked. In her discussion of 'Donut Dollies,' for example, Stur suggests that the Red Cross intended the women to embody "ideas about middle-class domesticity and contained sexuality" (68). Women who expected to serve cool drinks and engage in small talk were quite surprised, then, when propositioned by soldiers who assumed the women had come to offer another kind of service. She also notes the ways that increasing opportunities for women and evolving gender norms found their way into the military's nursing corps and the WAC, where women were lured with promises of both career opportunities and marriage prospects. Military officials also insisted that women don feminine uniforms that boosted male morale, even when working conditions made such attire impractical at best.

In this analysis, Stur draws from the models provided by Leisa D. Meyer and Kimberley Jensen, whose works on American women in the two World Wars reveal the ways domestic gender anxieties framed women's labor and its meanings.⁴ She also extends the thoughtful analyses provided by Ann Elizabeth Pfau, Meghan K. Winchell, and Robert Westbrook, who note the powerful ways women in World War II functioned as symbols of domesticity,

Families Overseas and the Cold War, 1946-1965 (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Kelly Oliver, *Women as Weapons of War: Iraq, Sex, and the Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Loren Baritz, *Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did* (New York: W. Morrow, 1985); James William Gibson, *The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).

³ Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Kristin Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Andrew J. Rotter, "Gender Relations, Foreign Relations: The United States and South Asia, 1947-1964" *Journal of American History* 81:2 (September 1994): 518-42.

⁴ Leisa D. Meier, *Creating G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps during World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Kimberley Jensen, *Mobilizing Minerva: American Women in the First World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

conventional femininity, and political obligation.⁵ My own work on army nurses in the Vietnam War moves this analysis forward chronologically, even as Stur reveals the ample opportunities for continued consideration of the relationship between the war and the tumultuous gender changes of the era.⁶

Stur reveals several commonalities in the ways that American women's experiences were shaped by gender, for example, but her work also raises questions about how gendered expectations might have differentiated the women's experiences based on the kind of work they performed. Stur points out, for example, that nurses and female soldiers endured propositions from soldiers in the same ways that 'Donut Dollies' did, leaving readers to wonder if 'Donut Dollies' experienced these expectations to a greater degree than other women because of the nature of their work, or if simply being female was enough to elicit such assumptions. Similarly, did WACs, the group of military women who most transgressed gender norms and who were the most racially diverse, face different kinds of gendered expectations than other women? These are all important questions, and Stur provides a solid place for future scholars to continue the examination.

While notions of wartime femininity fluctuated, Stur argues that the war also sparked changes in Cold War notions of masculinity. Military newspapers constructed images of soldiers as 'gentle warriors' delivering benevolent, if paternalistic, care and modernization to the South Vietnamese people. Official sources intended such images as a metaphor for U.S. policies in Vietnam, but as Stur argues, they contradicted another, equally important image of the GI as a gunslinger wielding the might of American power. The gentle warrior was also undermined by a "deep-seated military culture that perpetuated the idea that sexual violence was an expected and acceptable part of war." (169) As the American presence grew, so did prostitution, an industry condoned by military policies that did very little to squelch its rise on the outskirts of U.S. bases. Here, Stur makes significant strides toward a long-overdue study of the military's role in facilitating the industry. Such a story is difficult to tell given the paucity of official records, but she has made an impressive effort at revealing the implicit and explicit ways the military's warrior ethos condoned the sex trade.⁷ Even more, Vietnamese women and their Amerasian children offered a counter narrative to the military's benevolent claims for decades to come.

⁵ Ann Elizabeth Pfau, *Miss Yourlovin: GIs, Gender, and Domesticity during World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, <http://www.gutenberg-e.org/pfau/>); Meghan K. Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses during World War II*, Gender and American Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Robert Westbrook, "I want a girl, just like the girl that married Harry James': American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II" *American Quarterly* 42:4 (December 1990): 587-614.

⁶ Kara Dixon Vuic, *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

⁷ Katharine Moon, *Sex among Allies: Military Prostitution in U.S.-Korea Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

Images of wartime masculinity are always complex, as works by Nancy Bristow, Christina Jarvis, Andrew J. Huebner, and Susan Jeffords suggest.⁸ However, the contradictions between Cold War images of masculinity and the realities of the war in Vietnam led many GIs to question the correlations between war and gender that had justified the war in the first place. Complementing Michael Foley's work on masculinity and draft resistance, Stur argues that a "significant number of antiwar GIs specifically opposed the masculinity of the warrior myth" and linked their struggle to end the war with a broader struggle to reject sexism and racism (188).⁹ African American men and women, in particular, resisted the war, the draft, and militarization as extensions of white imperialistic policies and civil rights injustices. This insightful analysis of the many faces of American masculinity offers a new approach to our understanding of soldiers and soldiering, and, like Meredith H. Lair's study of consumerism in the war, reminds us that we still have much to learn about soldiers' experiences.¹⁰

As Stur suggests in her conclusion, the Vietnam War fractured the Cold War gender ideology. And yet, even as the military opened roles and ranks to women in the following decades, it resisted a complete redefinition of gender. In the wake of the ending of the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy and the recent opening of combat roles to women, the military continues to remake its gendered ideologies. As historians begin to analyze these events, and as they revisit earlier conflicts, *Beyond Combat* offers compelling reasons to place gender at the heart of the story.

⁸ Nancy Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 1998); Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004); Andrew J. Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture from the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War*, *Theories of Contemporary Culture*, vol. 10 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

⁹ Michael Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance during the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Meredith H. Lair, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

Author's Response by Heather Marie Stur, University of Mississippi

I am grateful to Tom Maddux for commissioning this roundtable and to Professors Justin Hart, Meredith Lair, Edwin Martini, and Kara Dixon Vuic for offering insightful comments and thought-provoking questions about *Beyond Combat*. These are historians whose work I deeply admire, and so I am especially honored that they took some time with mine and came away with generally positive assessments of it. It feels good to be in their scholarly company. Their useful critiques are starting points for important conversations about the topics I cover in my book and should inspire future scholarship. I will attempt to further the discussion here by responding to specific criticisms and clarifying my methodology and goals.

All four reviewers call for more context in some form or another. As Hart, author of the excellent *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy*, notes, there is room for broad comparisons between the role of gender in the Vietnam War and its place in the culture of other conflicts.¹ Across time and space, there are examples of machismo in military culture and expectations that women embody certain ideals during wartime. Why did I set the Vietnam War apart? In my introduction, I explain that while Vietnam War culture adopted gender conventions that had been present in earlier conflicts, the social upheavals of the 1960s transformed the war into a site on which American gender and race attitudes were concentrated and thrown into sharp relief (7). As I argue in my conclusion, sixties social movements not only brought attention to issues of gender and war in clearer ways, they also forced significant changes in military policies, opening the door to the full integration of women into the armed services and paving the way for women's advancement within the ranks. This was due, in part, to the unpopularity of the Vietnam War and the end of the draft in 1973. In order to meet personnel needs, the armed services had to repackage themselves as institutions where men and women could earn an education, develop employable skills, and establish a career. For these reasons, it is worth examining the Vietnam War outside the context of other wars even though we can draw parallels between the gendered nature of the Vietnam War and the influence of gender on earlier conflicts.

Vuic found much to commend in the book, and her review left me with a strong sense of validation given that her groundbreaking work, *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War*, is the foundation upon which I built *Beyond Combat*.² However, she, too, seeks context. What might the experiences of 'Donut Dollies,' female nurses, and Women's Army Corps personnel look like had I compared them more explicitly? Did a woman's status as a Red Cross worker or an Army intelligence specialist shape how she experienced the Vietnam War, or was simply being a woman enough to influence

¹ Justin Hart, *Empire of Ideas: The Origins of Public Diplomacy and the Transformation of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

² Kara Dixon Vuic, *Officer, Nurse, Woman: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009)

expectations about behavior, appearance, and symbolism in the war's culture? These are important questions, and the answers vary depending on the angle we use to view the women. Red Cross training materials instructed Donut Dollies to be a "touch of home" for weary soldiers, reminding them of why they fought (67). Symbolizing home was not in the official job descriptions of nurses or WACs, so from an institutional perspective, women had clearly different functions in the war effort. However, to a wounded soldier, a pretty nurse could be as uplifting as a Donut Dolly; it didn't matter what kind of uniform she wore or what medical skills she had. The impulse to essentialize women took on an unsavory character when some U.S. troops assumed that American women were in Vietnam to turn tricks and tempt lonely GIs to spend their pay on sexual favors even though there were all sorts of rules regulating women's sexuality. I agree with Vuic that more work needs to be done on how race shaped American women's experiences in the Vietnam War, and I hope that historians will use my discussions of African American Donut Dollies and racial tensions among WACs as springboards for additional scholarship.

Women—in image and in reality—get top billing in *Beyond Combat*, but because my goal was to write a gender history, not a women's history, I worked to ensure that men and masculinity were more than supporting cast members in the story. This is where Martini finds fault with the book, citing a lack of originality in chapter four and calling for more engagement with the veteran as victim discourses that developed in the 1970s and 1980s. His observation that the gentle warrior, John Wayne, and sexual aggressor images are not new to the Vietnam War narrative is correct, but presenting them as new was not the intention of the chapter. Martini does recognize that I used these masculinity tropes to demonstrate how they were intertwined with Vietnam-era constructions of femininity so that neither could exist in isolation. I also provide race context by pointing out the gray areas that African American, Latino, and Asian American servicemen occupied (151-53). Most important to me was to illustrate consequences of and challenges to the images, which I did in the sections on 'black babies' and Madame Phuong, an entrepreneurial Vietnamese woman who clashed with Army officials over her bid to establish a massage parlor at Long Binh, the largest U.S. military base in Vietnam and site of Army headquarters (171-80). Black babies, the children of African American servicemen and Vietnamese women, were living legacies of culture having been put into practice. My discussion of black babies puts U.S. troops and their impact on Vietnam in the broader context of Vietnam's colonial history by addressing an older generation of mixed-race children whose fathers were French African soldiers. The Madame Phuong story reminds us that imperial power hierarchies are always being challenged and renegotiated as subjugated peoples exploit the tensions and contradictions inherent in power structures. The masculinity tropes are the starting point for a much broader examination of the impact of U.S. intervention on Vietnam and the Vietnamese, and the multilayered nature of chapter four is what sets it apart from works that study the tropes simply as part of U.S. Cold War culture. As for the development of the veteran as victim discourses, I agree with Martini that this is a subject in need of additional investigation. As he points out, both here and in his noteworthy book, *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975-2000*, key to those discourses are the erasure of Vietnamese voices from American collective memory of the

war; I would add that it is also important to explore the reemergence of certain Vietnamese images and characters in movies, novels, and other popular representations of the war.³

In addition to some targeted criticisms, Lair finds two overarching problems with the book: first, a failure to fully define “combat,” and second, a lack of emphasis on rape and sexual assault as weapons in the American arsenal. Regarding combat, Lair’s critique draws on her important work, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War*, which persuasively argues that combat was not the primary experience of most American men who served in Vietnam despite a collective memory of the war that says otherwise.⁴ She interprets my title as having set up a false dichotomy that suggests that all American men served in combat while all women operated outside the combat realm. This is a misreading of the title’s meaning. As I state in my introduction, looking beyond the “combat moment” offers a more nuanced picture of what American women *and* men were doing in Vietnam (2). In fact, I argue that “a substantial majority of interactions between American men and various groups of women, whether American or Vietnamese, took place not in combat situations, but on bases in Long Binh and Qui Nhon, in brothels in An Khe and Cam Ranh Bay, and along the boulevards of cities such as Saigon and Da Nang” (2). The purpose of *Beyond Combat* is to illustrate how the daily, ordinary interactions between Americans and Vietnamese are as important to our understanding of the war as combat is. I go on in my introduction to acknowledge specifically that U.S. servicemen held a variety of positions outside of combat in Vietnam (7). To look “beyond combat” means to recognize that the impact of U.S. intervention in Vietnam reached far outside the battlefields, and that Americans were involved in that intervention in all sorts of ways. As for whether American women actually experienced combat, Lair is correct to point out that most American women, like most American men, served out of harm’s way in Vietnam. However, I explored how American women understood combat and their relationship to it because *Beyond Combat* is concerned with what images and perceptions tell us about the impact of the war on American identity. For some of the women featured in the book, their brushes with combat led them to question the gender roles that had been assigned to them, and I included their stories for their symbolic meanings, not to convey a statistical reality (16). As to Lair’s dissatisfaction with the lack of attention to rape and sexual assault, I agree with her that work needs to be done on sexual violence in the Vietnam War. However, her critique points to the reason why that is not a focus of my book. *Beyond Combat*, a cultural history, emphasizes perceptions more than behavior, and to do justice to the subject would require a methodology that is out of the scope of the book.

The issue of image versus reality also causes concern for Lair regarding two sets of my sources. She worried that readers might take the U.S. sources on Americans’ perceptions of Vietnamese women as evidence of actual Vietnamese gender roles and family structures.

³ Edwin Martini, *Invisible Enemies: The American War on Vietnam, 1975-2000* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

⁴ Meredith Lair, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

To avoid such misunderstandings, I labeled chapters and subheadings purposefully to remind readers that I am discussing Americans' views of the Vietnamese and how those views shaped the culture of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Similarly, she sees my use of the criticism of antiwar GIs of basic training as lacking context, but I engaged the work of Christian Appy, Richard Moser, Robert Jay Lifton, David Cortwright, Gerald Nicosia, and Andrew Hunt to explain the culture of basic training and the ways in which antiwar GIs articulated their opposition to the Vietnam conflict.⁵ My use of GI antiwar newspapers was meant to illustrate how antiwar GIs and veterans perceived their military experiences, not to provide data on what they actually underwent.

In closing, I thank Professors Hart, Lair, Martini, and Vuic for their careful readings of *Beyond Combat* and their astute observations about my work. I look forward to continued conversations and new scholarship on the important issues they discussed in their reviews.

Copyright © 2013 H-Net: Humanities and Social Sciences Online. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, H-Diplo, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the H-Diplo Editors at h-diplo@h-net.msu.edu.

⁵ Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); David Cortwright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2005); Andrew Hunt, *The Turning: A History of Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: NYU Press, 2001); Robert Jay Lifton, *Home from the War: Learning from Vietnam Veterans* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); Richard Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam Era* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Gerald Nicosia, *Home to War: A History of the Vietnam Veterans Movement* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004)