

# “GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM!” The discursive construction of nationhood in the War Remnant Museum wall-texts

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**Abstract** – When the tourism industry is operatively organized by governmental institutions, it seems that the destination is commodified in ways that are ideologically constructed so as to ‘educate’ tourists to perceive them as having a historically different identity. This seems to be what happens when visiting the War Remnant Museum (WRM) in Vietnam. The WRM is a war museum, in Ho Chi Min City, containing exhibits related to the Vietnam and Indochina wars in a series of themed rooms; they include graphic photography accompanied by wall-texts, in English, Vietnamese and Japanese, covering the effects of such chemicals as Agent Orange and other defoliant sprays, the use of napalm and phosphorus bombs and other war atrocities. Since, in some guide books written for an international Western audience, we read that the Cold War is dealt with by looking at the US with a benevolent eye, there seems to be some dissonance between what the Cold War is, how it is described in guidebooks and what is told about the WRM. The purpose of this study is to analyse the discursive construction of Vietnamese identity through the descriptions of war in the wall-texts found in the WRM. More specifically, this study aims to investigate how the WRM frames Vietnamese identity construction and how this can be inscribed in the tourist experience. This corpus-based methodological approach (WordSmith Tools and WMatrix) is grounded in critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 2001, 2006, 2014). What seems to emerge from this investigation is that the Vietnamese war, as depicted by the WRM, is not simply the other side of the coin. Reality is filtered through an ideological lens of political interpretation used by the Vietnamese which frames discursive processes and strategies that establish the social order and power relations in a useful way in the construction of a strong national identity to be reproduced in WRM wall-texts. Such an analysis can provide useful insights into multifaceted aspects of the institutional discourse(s) related to the construction of a national identity and at the same time linked to the commodification of war.

**Keywords:** CDA, Corpus Linguistics, dark tourism, institutional political discourse and tourism, ideology

## 1. Introduction

Much of tourists’ degree of satisfaction depends on the correspondence between the tourist’s expectations and reality and ultimately how such expectations can be transformed into experience – the holiday package. The dissonance between ‘here’ and ‘there’ can disillusion tourists (Urry, 1990, p. 13). Sometimes, however, the tourism industry or institutions commodify the ‘there’ in ways that are ideologically constructed so as to ‘educate’ the tourists to perceive it as having a historically different identity.

This seems to be what happens when visiting the War Remnant Museum (WRM) in Vietnam. The WRM is a war museum in Ho Chi Min City containing exhibits, related to the Vietnam and Indochina wars, in a series of themed rooms; they include graphic photography accompanied by wall-texts, in English, Vietnamese and Japanese, covering the effects of chemicals such as Agent Orange and other defoliant sprays, the use of napalm and phosphorus bombs and other war atrocities. It is enclosed, accessible on payment of an admission fee, has exhibits with pregnant, educative and symbolic meanings, a souvenir shop and a website (<http://warremnantmuseum.com>), and though it

does not have a café or a restaurant, the WRM is undoubtedly a tourist site.

In some guidebooks written for an international Western audience, we read that the Cold War is dealt with by looking at the US with a benevolent eye, with the Americans as protectors opposing Communism. In *Lonely Planet*, for instance, of the 21 pages devoted to Vietnamese history, about seven are dedicated to the Vietnamese-American war, using Hollywood-like and sometimes ironic language, while the history of Vietnam from 1975 until now (which has been important in dealing with liberation, the wars with Cambodia and China, famine and isolation and the introduction of *doi moi*) are treated in just two pages.<sup>1</sup> The section devoted to the WRM describes it as the museum most popular with Western tourists, “a unique, brutal and essential stop” (408). There is clearly some dissonance between what the Cold War is, what the WRM is and what is told about the WRM.

This study analyses the discursive construction of Vietnamese identity through the descriptions of war in the wall-texts found in the WRM. More specifically, this study aims to investigate how the WRM frames Vietnamese identity construction and how this can be inscribed in the tourist experience.

After a description of dark tourism and an examination of its key concepts applied to the touristification of the theme of war, and its description through museum wall-texts, the study continues, focusing in particular on lexical items revealing the discursive strategies used to construct a national identity.

What seems to emerge from this investigation is that the Vietnamese wars, as depicted by the WRM, are not simply the other side of the coin. Reality is filtered through the ideological lens of the political interpretation used by the Vietnamese, which frames the discursive processes and strategies establishing the social order and power relations that are useful in the construction of a strong national identity to be reproduced in the WRM wall-texts.

Thus, such an analysis can provide useful insights into multifaceted aspects of the institutional discourse(s) related to the construction of a national identity, and at the same time linked to the commodification of war.

### 1.1. *Dark tourism and wall-texts*

According to Light (2017), there has been increasing interest, within tourism studies, in research into topics concerning the relationship between tourism and death. Within this relationship we have to distinguish between *dark tourism* and *thanatourism*. While *dark tourism* is an umbrella term in which we include any form of tourism somehow related to death, suffering, atrocity, tragedy or crime, *thanatourism* “is a more specific concept about long-standing practices of travel motivated by a specific desire for an encounter with death” (Light 2017, p. 277). They are therefore closely related, and yet distinct.

In this essay, we will speak of *dark tourism* in general terms and refer to it as “visitations to places where tragedies or historically noteworthy death has occurred and that continue to impact our lives” (Tarlow 2005, p. 48) because of their political or historical significance (Stone 2016).

In this sense then (Coldwell 2013, web link), “*darktourism* doesn’t need dark tourists” but rather “people who are interested in learning about this life and this world”, albeit this can represent a labyrinth of suffering, memorialised in museums built on the very same spots where this suffering occurred and which catalyse new forms of nationalism (Kennicott 2014).

<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth and objective analysis of Vietnam history and the Vietnam wars, see Montessoro (2000, 2004), Young (1991).

If the first forms of *dark tourism* date back to Roman gladiatorial games, public executions occurring from mediaeval times up to the 19th c. and “the guided morgue tours of the Victorian period, the Chamber of Horrors exhibition of Madame Tussaud, or in ‘correction houses’” (Stone 2005, p. 111), nowadays, *dark tourism* is realised in many forms, as research in tourism studies has revealed (of which only the most recent one is reported here for lack of space): *dark tourism*, indeed, includes forms of Holocaust tourism (Isaac and Çakmak 2014; Busby and Devereux 2015; Magee and Gilmore 2015; Nawijn, Isaac, van Liempt, and Gridnevskiy 2016), battlefield and war cemetery tourism (Kokkranikal, Yang, Powell, and Booth 2016; MacCarthy 2016; Fallon and Robinson 2017), detention centres, prisons and war-camp tourism (Dehoorne and Jolliffe 2013; Kang and Lee 2013; Gould 2014; Levey 2014; Casella and Fennelly 2016); slavery heritage (Jamal and Lelo 2011; Lelo and Jamal 2013; Forsdick 2014), celebrity death sites (Best 2013) and ‘terrorism-associated tourism’ (Sturken 2007); genocide sites (Hohenhaus 2013; Koleth 2014; Isaac and Çakmak 2016); Ground-Zero tourism (Catenaccio 2017; Sather-Wagstaff 2011; Potts 2012; Stone 2012) – to quote just a few of them.

Research has also paid attention to the reasons behind the desire to visit places of suffering and death; and these include, for instance, the desire or opportunity to learn or understand what happened at these sites (Isaac and Çakmak 2016; Kamber et al. 2016) or having an interest in history (Kokkranikal et al. 2016); visiting for personal connections to a site (Yankholmes and McKercher 2015), in a sort of pilgrimage (Brown 2016), or simply for remembrance (Isaac and Çakmak 2016; Kamber et al. 2016). In some cases, the reasons are based on the recognition that a site is important for a national identity (Cheal and Griffin 2013; Hyde and Harman 2011; Tinson et al. 2015) that a tourist identifies with. Lennon and Foley (2000, p. 11) claim that for war tourists travelling to former sites of violent conflict is an expression of “anxiety and doubt about the project of modernity”. What is clear, in any case, is that when painful places get branded, trauma, war and suffering are branded and commodified as well, through memories displayed in pictures and framed in language whose discourse is constrained in wall-texts.

Wall-texts are brief descriptive and interpretative texts that accompany museum artworks, in both permanent and temporary exhibitions, with the purpose of providing them with a context displayed for the visitors’ benefit. These texts – normally copyrighted and belonging to the press house publishing the museum’s exhibition catalogue (as claimed by our informant, a freelance translator) – are a museological phenomenon. Not inserted in any exhibition catalogue, they are available to visitors in various formats: displayed as labels, signposts or scripts next to artworks, projected onto screens or museum walls, printed on posters or glued onto installations (Maci 2015). They create a privileged discursive relation with the visitor: their narration captures the visitor to the extent that they hinder the visitor’s trip through the museum, which does not start before reading the wall-texts is over. In so doing, they themselves become cultural artworks, with the purpose of expanding one’s background culture, having an absorbing experience and meeting people with the same artistic interests (Margarito 2006). Their importance lies in the fact that they “interpret the artwork and recreate the context in which the work of art was elaborated. This is particularly true not only when the masterpiece is created in past times, but also when the masterpiece is created in different places, and therefore different cultures, which the visitor is accustomed to” (Maci 2015, p. 137).

Wall-texts have hardly been investigated, apart from an applied linguistic study by Maci (2016) and an investigation by Margarito (2005, 2006), which comprises, however, examinations of French wall-texts from a cultural and multimodal perspective. Devenish (1990) offers a description of the different types of scripts that can be found in museums, but without any interpretative analysis. Ravelli (1996) analyzes wall-texts from a

pedagogical perspective and, drawing from systemic functional grammar, she tries to create guidelines for wall-text writing. In a more recent study, Ravelli (2007), with a systemic-functional approach, explores how language is used in museums in an interactive, interpersonal and representational way to build an understanding of the world the museum is portraying.

The connection between dark tourism, war and wall-texts has, to the best of our knowledge, received little if any attention from the academic world. As far as we know, there are only two papers about the relation between the construction of nationhood in Vietnam: Gillen (2014), who explores the presentation of the “American War” in the WRM from a geo-political perspective, Alneng (2002), who analyses the role the Vietnamese wars played from an anthropological angle.

An analysis about the construction of nationhood through wall-texts calls for a CDA approach. As claimed by Widdowson (2000), CDA uncovers the implicit ideology in a text, since the nuances and intricacies of discourse production and comprehension are rarely detected without any specific linguistic training. CDA relies on the assumption that discourse is socially constructed rather than naturally created, and as such it is the result of a social practice and is a social practice itself (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 2001, 2006, 2014). Since society is organised in social networks or layers, there are as many social practices as there are networks in society, which in turn is based on each and every one of them: from a linguistic perspective, these are orders of discourse in which all linguistic and non-linguistic elements interact, building power relations maintained and reproduced through discourse. In a way, this is related to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: the way in which discourse is used moulds the way in which society is perceived, which in turn influences how people think. Reality, therefore, will always be socially and culturally perceived and hence situated; consequently, our understanding of the world will always be subject to socio-historical and ideological constraints.

The connections between tourism and CDA have rarely been analysed, and the few works doing that tend to apply CDA in different ways from the one proposed here. Feighery (2011), for instance, shows how tourism discourse in Official Tourism Organizations appears to be common sense and apolitical, characterized by concepts of denial, equality, otherness and silence, which are routinely deployed. Dyers and Wankah (2012) base their investigation on CDA to detect discursive constructions of “the Other”, which, they reveal, is the basis of considerable use of stereotypes. Wang and Morais (2014) focus their attention on how self-identity is constructed in tourism weblogs. Small et al. (2003) reveal that inflight magazines, although ideologically neutral, are actually powerful representations of the norms and values to which travellers should supposedly adhere. In none of these works, however, is there the idea that tourism discourse endorses the dominant ideology of the culture promoting that type of discourse.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no CDA study related to tourism showing that language reproduces the social networks, which influence how we think and use discourse – which ultimately is ideological. No study seems to reveal that even tourism discourse is a means by which power and ideology within societies are expressed. The CDA approach adopted here tries to reveal the extent to which discourse confirms the social structures (with their power and ideology) within which it exists and, at the same time, may construct an ideological lens through which society can be interpreted, by establishing and reproducing the social networks, roles and identities on which it is constructed. In other words, what we find here seems to be a form of political authority operationalized by means of communicative acts (Chilton 2004, p. 4), realised here through wall-texts.

In the following paragraphs we will seek to describe how nationhood and propaganda are constructed in linguistic terms within the framing device of wall-texts in the commodifying process of war and tragedy for, apparently, tourism purposes. In either case, a CDA approach (Fairclough 2014) is fundamental, given the strong links between power, language and society; and the three cannot be given consideration separately (Fairclough 2006; Fairclough et al. 2011).

## 1.2. *The WRM as a tourist destination*

According to Lonely Planet, the WRM is the most popular museum in Ho Chi Min City with Western tourists. Located at 28 Võ Văn Tần Phường 6 Quận 3, it is in a three-floor building. On the ground floor, there are remnants of the French and American armies' equipment and torture weapons: visually, the tourist is influenced to interpret the symbols and objects collected from a one-way perspective. This is also confirmed by the exhibition called *Crimes at Phu Quoc Prison*. Here, both pictures and scripts show how the US used 75 different torture techniques to elicit information from prisoners of war (POWs), amongst them “Burning Prisoners”, “Burning Sex Organs” and “Disembodying Prisoner’s Teeth”. In contrast, Vietnamese soldiers are described as “patriotic” people who “didn’t yield to cruel suppression and terror but resiliently [engaged in] many fighting activities such as eliminating security guards” [sic]. The camp itself is described as “not only one of the evidences [sic] of aggressive war crimes but also a convincing proof [sic] of patriotic soldiers’ resilience in the war against aggression to protect the country’s independence”. Interestingly, the words used here, *aggressive war crimes*, position the US on the side of the aggressor who is menacing another state’s freedom. Indeed, Vietnam was resiliently fighting “against aggression to protect the country’s independence” (See Gillen 2014, p. 1314).

On entering the building, the tourist is welcomed with pictures reproducing the pro-Vietnam protests and marches against the US intervention which were held in almost 50 countries around the world. “There is a sense in this part of the museum that Vietnam’s allies are not categorized with respect to the recognizable regional and political divisions often used to distinguish the West from the East” (Gillen 2014, p. 1315).

On the first floor, the tourist is invited to reflect on some statistics: the US spent \$352 billion on the war; 7,850,000 tons of bombs were dropped; 75,000,000 litres of defoliants were sprayed over South Vietnam; around three million Vietnamese were killed and over four million injured, most of whom were civilians. Each person is given a name, age, gender and, whenever possible, a picture – casualties are humanised:

(1)

The sewer of Mr. Bui Van Vat was used in 1969. On the night of February 25, 1969, a group of Seal Rangers (one of the most select units of the U.S. Army) led by Lieutenant Bob Kerry reached Hamlet S, Thanh Phong Village, Thanh Phu District, Ben Tre Province. Three grandchildren of Bui Van Vat were hidden in this sewer but the U.S. rangers caught and stabbed two (Bui Thi Anh – 10 years and Bui Thi Nguyet – 8 years old) and disembowelled one (Bui Van Dan – 6 years old). On February 4, 2009, the 40th anniversary of the massacred victims’ deaths, Mrs Bui Thi Nhi (BuiVan Vat’s daughter) donated to the War Remnants Museum this sewer for exhibition. (WRM71)

This contrasts strikingly with a statement from the Nuremberg trial of Nazi war criminals, in which the US played a leading role amongst the Allies, reproduced in the WRM:

To initiate a war of aggression is not only an international crime, it is the supreme international crime, differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evils of the whole.

The US, to Western eyes a Paladin of Right, is held responsible for a “war of aggression”, exactly as the Nazis were, and this responsibility is assigned by the WRM. “The War Museum deliberately tells a one-sided story which clashes with the Hollywood perspective” (Alneng 2002, p. 476), a story in which the tourist can see photographic evidence of the effects of bombing and Agent Orange defoliant’s devastating consequences, still ongoing today.

The second floor has three exhibitions: *Agent Orange in the War*, which is a repeat of what is found on the first floor; *Requiem: The Photo Collection of the US Aggressive War in Vietnam*, which includes original photographs taken by war correspondents from the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom; and *Historic Truths*, showing pictures of about 30 Vietnamese towns before (in black-and-white) and after (in colour) the war, to show the ability to revitalise and rebuild Vietnam (Gillen 2014, p. 1308).

The wall-texts we will analyse in the following paragraphs are those on the second floor in the *Requiem* exhibition.

## 2. Methodological approach

The investigation is grounded in critical discourse analysis (CDA) and based on a corpus-based methodological approach.

In a recent trip to Vietnam, we visited the WRM and photographed all the wall-texts in the museum exhibitions. The investigation carried out here is based on an analysis of all the wall-texts found on the second floor (see above), because they are thematically linked, being related to photographs taken by Vietnam war photographers. We thus formed a small corpus of 71 WRM wall-texts (8,659 running words). All the wall-texts were run through WordSmith Tools 6 (Scott 2012) and WMatrix (Rayson 2009). Thanks to the *wordlist* suite in WordSmith tools, a wordlist was first generated. This wordlist was statistically compared against the wordlist of the written BNC corpus present in WordSmith Tools using log-likelihood and chi-square statistical tests<sup>2</sup> with  $p < 0.001$  set by default. A list of 274 keywords was thus created. Their concordance lines<sup>3</sup> were then analysed to better contextualise each keyword. The corpus was then checked with WMatrix and, thanks to USAS and the UCREL Semantic Analysis System (a framework for undertaking the automatic semantic analysis of texts),<sup>4</sup> we were able to tag keywords from a semantic perspective. In this way, all keywords were categorized in the semantic domains detected by WMatrix. The WordSmith Tool analysis was completed and cross-checked with an investigation carried out with WMatrix, as we had:

- keywords;
- keyword concordance lines;
- keyword semantic domains.

Furthermore, the correspondence between each keyword and its semantic domain was manually checked (i.e. the excerpt in which the keyword was found was read to better contextualize the keyword and its semantic domain). All the semantic fields detected with WMatrix were thus identified in order to see how Vietnamese identity is constructed from

<sup>2</sup> Costas and Marchi (2012) in explaining that keywords are words with an extremely high frequency compared to the norm. For this reason, the statistics to be used in computing keywords should be the Chi-Square test. Log-likelihood test, set by default in WordSmith Tools, measures the statistical significance rather than the frequency difference. Therefore, a combination of the two tests will allow me to detect keywords by frequency difference *and* statistical significance.

<sup>3</sup> A concordance line is a line taken from the text which contains the lexical item under investigation.

<sup>4</sup> Further information available at <http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/wmatrix3.html>.

a CDA perspective.

As claimed by Widdowson (2000), CDA uncovers the ideology implicit in a text, since the nuances and intricacies of discourse production and comprehension are rarely detected without any specific linguistic training. CDA relies on the assumption that discourse is socially constructed rather than naturally created, and as such it is the result of a social practice and is a social practice itself (Fairclough 1989, 1992, 2001, 2006, 2014). Since society is organised in social networks or layers, there are as many social practices as there are networks of society based on them: from a linguistic perspective, these are orders of discourse in which all linguistic and non-linguistic elements interact, building power-relations maintained and reproduced through discourse. In a way, this is related to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: the way in which discourse is used moulds the way in which society is perceived which, in turn, influences how people think. Reality, therefore, will always be socially and culturally perceived, and hence situated; consequently, our understanding of the world will always be subject to socio-historical and ideological constraints.

### 3. The wall-text analysis: results

The analysis of wall-texts was done in two phases: (a) an investigation of the corpus with Wordsmith Tools, which yielded keywords; (b) a cross-check of the results with WMatrix through semantic tagging. When examples are taken from the wall-texts, they will be shown as WRM followed by a number indicating the number of the picture, e.g. WRM1, WRM2, WRM3 etc.

#### 3.1. Keywords

As said above, 274 keywords were detected. They are generally related to the following issues:

- military action;
- war;
- politics;
- photography.

Some keywords are interesting – though they might appear ‘neutral’, when analysed in the co-text they appear in, they acquire a different sense from what we might expect, given the semantic field in which they were classified by WMatrix (and reported in § 3.2.). These are indicated in Table 1, below. For a better understanding of the Table, we will describe its aspects in detail, followed by data interpretation in the following paragraphs.

In the first column of Table 1 we have the keyword position on a 274 keyness scale; in the second column the keyword under consideration; the third column shows the frequency of the item; the fourth its frequency in percentage terms; the fifth indicates the occurrence of the same term in a comparison corpus (in this case, the written BNC); in the sixth column is the relative percentage; and in the last column is the keyness value of the item under consideration.

<i>N</i>	<i>Key word</i>	<i>Freq.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>RC. Freq.</i>	<i>RC. %</i>	<i>Keyness</i>
36	VIETNAMIZATION	3	0.03	1	17,584.92	0.0000000000
74	PUPPET	8	0.09	296	2,068.05	0.0000000000
112	REGIME	14	0.16	3,318	589.07	0.0000000000
124	PATRIOTIC	5	0.06	558	395.96	0.0000000000
262	AGGRESSIVE	3	0.03	1,915	31.85	0.000000137

Table 1.  
Wall-text Keywords

Although the keyword in Table 1 are in a low position on the keyness scale, as their keyness values are not particularly high, we are analysing them because we did not expect to find these items as keywords, given their semantic fields. For instance, without any in-depth analysis of the text, co-text and context, we found the presence of *puppet* (2<sup>nd</sup> line of Table 1) in the semantic field of shows and exhibitions, which seems strange as the WRM deals with the Vietnam War.

As said above, in the following paragraph we will analyse each keyword separately.

### 3.1.1. *Vietnamization*

The term *Vietnamization* (3 occurrences, 0.03%) refers to the process of de-Americanization started by President Nixon, by means of which South Vietnam was gradually given its own military autonomy from 1969 onwards. It occurs three times. While in two occurrences, the term is in a neutral context, in one case, the item is negatively connoted because it is in a negative context, as revealed by excerpt (2), below (my emphasis here and there):

(2)

“After the Paris Peace Accord, the U.S. obstinately continued the policy of “Vietnamization of the war”, ordering the Saigon army to carry on with the war by “encroachment and pacification”, trying hard to repress the political forces of patriotic people, opposing the policy of national *reconciliation* and *concord*, thus severely violating the Paris Peace Accord.” (WRM45)

The US is described as a state that *obstinately* goes on with its policy, *ordering*, *repressing* patriotic people, *opposing* ideas of reconciliation and concord. Clearly, the image is that of a country deprived of common sense, a spoiled child who does not want to listen to reason. *Vietnamization of war*, as a consequence, is negative, precisely because it is something desired by the US and contrary to reason: what patriotic people want is not the Vietnamization of war but rather national reconciliation.

### 3.1.2. *Puppet*

*Puppet* (8 occurrences, 0.09%) is the metaphor used to indicate a government supposedly independent but actually ruled by an outside power (OED). As seen in Table 1, above, and better in Table 2, below, we have 8 concordance lines for *Puppet*:



NConcordance	
1	S and 48.000 South Vietnam <b>puppet</b> troops with the support of
2	1971 1972 South Vietnamese <b>puppet</b> 514,000 643,000 735,000 79
3	civil administration of the <b>puppet</b> regime. Photo: Military eq
4	UMENTS PROVIED TO SAI GON <b>PUPPET</b> GOVERNMENT (1954-1975) Tan
5	the imposition of our first <b>puppet</b> regime in South Vietnam, t
6	commanding officers of the <b>puppet</b> army (September, 1963). 3
7	TRIES AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE <b>PUPPET</b> MILITARY FORCES 1964 1965
8	military zone of the Saigon <b>puppet</b> army made an inspection

Table 2.  
Concordance lines for *Puppet*

Collocates one word to the right indicate that *puppet* is found with *troop*, *army*, *regime*, *government* and *military force*. Therefore, it is not only the South Vietnam government that is a ‘puppet’ but also its military institutions, which give less and less credibility to the reasons for the war in South Vietnam.

### 3.1.3. *Regime*

As indicated in Table 3, below, the keyword *regime* (14 occurrences, 0.16%) refers to *Saigon* or *Ngo Dinh Diem regime*, which is a dictatorial regime, as clearly indicated in line 14:

NConcordance	
4	s. The Air Force of <i>Saigon regime</i> was the third largest in t
5	rters of the former <i>Saigon Regime</i> , and others from Australia
6	ministration of the <i>puppet regime</i> . Photo: Military equipment
7	u, President of the <i>Saigon regime</i> (April 1973) in San Clemen
8	launched by <i>Ngo Dinh Diem regime</i> for repression and persecu
9	tration, the <i>Ngo Dinh Diem regime</i> tried to sabotage the Gene
10	In May, 1959 <i>the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem</i> promulgate
11	derous U.S.- <i>Ngo Dinh Diem regime</i> , people from all walks of
12	collapse of <i>Ngo Dinh Diem regime</i> , the U.S. authorities set
13	ion, building a <u>democratic regime</u> , and advancing toward peace
14	overthrow the <b>dictatorial regime</b> of <i>Ngo Dinh Diem</i> , putting

Table 3.  
Concordance lines for *Regime*

Furthermore, such a regime is a *puppet* (line 6), as it is the one established and actually ruled by the US, one that people want to overthrow:

- (3)  
Not contenting themselves with the repressive and murderous **U.S.-Ngo Dinh Diem regime**, people from all walks of life in South Vietnam gathered together to found the National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam in order to **overthrow the dictatorial regime of Ngo Dinh Diem**, putting an end to the American intervention, *building a democratic regime*, and advancing toward peace and reunification of the country. (WRM18)

Excerpt (3), for example, not only openly states that the Ngo Dinh regime (previously defined as a *puppet* regime, for instance in concordance line 6) is under the influence of the US, since it is the “U.S.-Ngo Dinh Diem regime”, but also claims that it is “repressive”

and “murderous”. Such a regime is, as explained later, a “dictatorial one” and people want to overthrow it. The perspective is that of people who want to be free from the constraints of an authoritarian regime. The connotation of the item *regime* is therefore mainly negative (see also the OED).

#### 3.1.4. *Patriotic*

In addition, the dictatorial nature of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime is evident in the fact that patriotic people are killed:

(4)

Backed up and encouraged by the U.S. administration, the Ngo Dinh Diem regime tried to sabotage the Geneva Agreements systematically, refused to hold consultations on general elections for reunification of the country, made indiscriminate arrests, [engaged in] detentions and killings of patriotic people (WRM17)

(5)

In May, 1959 the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem promulgated Law 10/59 authorizing ... special military courts to sentence to death on the spot those who were branded as “endangering the national security”, in essence, they were patriotic people struggling against the savage and cruel repression of Ngo Dinh Diem (WRM16)

These *patriotic* (5 occurrences, 0.06%) people, are of course, people who oppose the *puppet* government and who fight against the *puppet* army, people who struggle “against the savage and cruel repression of Ngo Dinh Diem” – Vietnamese people, who are in combat against a dictatorial state, where freedom does not exist, as confirmed by (4), above, where there is a hint of “indiscriminate arrests, detention and killing of patriotic people”. The idea conveyed is that of a state where the only governmental expression is realised as dictatorship.

#### 3.1.5. *Aggressive*

The term *aggressive* (3 occurrences, 0.03%) is found three times. The first time we find it is in the opening section of the *Requiem* exhibition on the second floor, as reported in (6):

(6)

REQUIEM – THE PHOTO COLLECTION OF THE U.S. AGGRESSIVE WAR IN VIETNAM (WRM50)

This clearly gives us the angle from which to interpret all the pictures collected and exhibited there – and not a favourable one towards the US. Clearly, the US is again lacking in common sense. In addition, considering that all wars are aggressive and violent by nature, the collocation ‘aggressive war’ is foregrounded because it sounds like a cliché. The U.S Vietnam war is described as *aggressive* so as to negatively point out that, contrary to reason, it was desired by the US.

### 3.2. *Semantic Tags*

Using WMatrix and USAS, we detected the semantic fields (called SemTags; see Table 4, in the *Annex*) in which all the keywords were classified. This was done in order to see whether the keyword analysis carried out with WordSmith Tools could be confirmed. The findings reveal an interesting perspective from an ideological stance.

Of all the keywords taken into consideration, we found 71 items or tokens that were grouped into 25 SemTags (see Table 5, in the *Annex*) and clashed with the overall WRM topic. For instance, SemTag S1.2.6 is labelled as “foolish” and contains the keyword *unreasonable*. Though the adjective *unreasonable* can be used to indicate something foolish, we could not understand why “foolish” was one of the categories grouping some of the WRM keywords. A manual check (i.e. reading) of each keyword included in the SemTag it belonged to allowed us to better contextualize such keywords (which below are in italics).

Of the 71 items found, 49 tokens negatively refer to the US or their Allies. They are mainly adjectives or adverbs modifying verbs and showing the negative behaviours of the US and/or the Allies towards Vietnamese people. Indeed, the US or their Allies act *obstinately*, *falsely*; they are *cruel*, *ferocious* and *unreasonable*; they started an *aggressive* war involving *massacring* people and *disembowelling* kids; created a *puppet dictatorial* regime which used *repression* against the *patriotic* people of Vietnam.

Ten positive elements are assigned to Vietnam, the majority of which are *patriotic* and *spirit*. Eleven elements are perceived as neutral and all of these are attributed to US war photographers. They are the only non-Vietnamese people who are described as *brave* and *courageous*, facing *daring* times. They are war correspondents, some of whom died in the war; and since they were the only ones describing exactly what was going on, they are the only ones worth the attribution of heroes they are given.

## 4. Discussion

The analysis with both Wordsmith and WMatrix revealed that items used in an ideological way are neither frequent nor at the top of the keyword list. Indeed, of all the keywords searched, just 1.82% are used in an ideological way. If we compare them to the overall number of words comprising the corpus of wall-texts (8,659 words), they are just 0.05%. If we look at semantic tags, items carrying an ideological sense – because of the context – number just 51 which, compared to the overall number of tokens, corresponds to 0.58% of all words. This means that 99.42% of the text does not seem to be ideologically biased. One may wonder why, then, when reading the WRM wall-texts, one seems to be reading propagandistic text. It is true that 51 items in 71 wall-texts means that, at most, 71.83% of the wall-texts have an item in them which, though not propagandistic in the strict sense, has subtler rhetorical strategies – perhaps emphasised by the interaction between verbal elements and graphic images, as we can see, for example, in Figure 1, below:

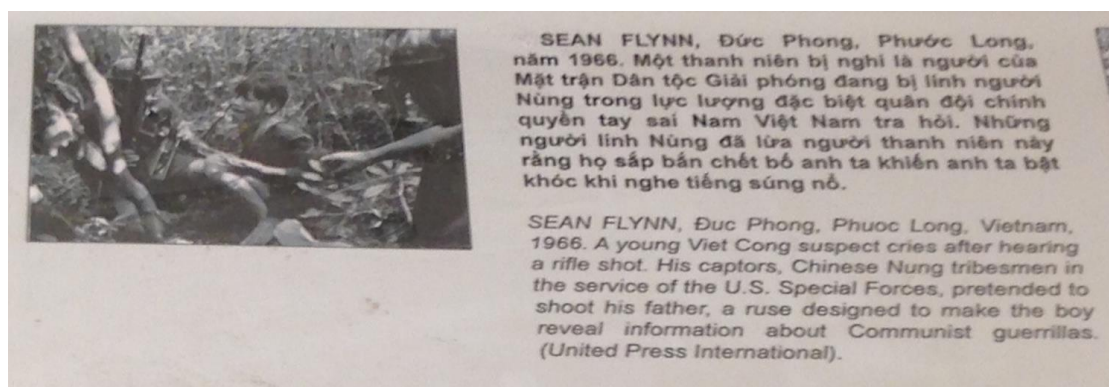


Figure 1  
Interaction between verbal element and graphic image.

In our opinion, the WRM operates on various levels. While it interprets and evaluates reality through the verbal and visual components of the exhibition,<sup>5</sup> the museum gives meaning to this reality and constructs nationhood: a state that is resilient to violence and oppression, and that, for this reason, emerges as a winner. In all of this, there is the role played by semantic prosody. Semantic prosody is the “consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates” (Louw 1993, p. 157, see also Sinclair 1991, pp. 74-75). As said above, keywords and Semtags per se do not say a lot: it is the relationship between tokens and words that does so. To put it in the words of Partington (1998, p. 68), semantic prosody is “the spreading of connotational colouring beyond single word boundaries”. Indeed, there seems to be negative semantic prosody for the US and positive semantic prosody for Vietnam. While “Nixon intensified the destruction war in Northern Vietnam [with]an unprecedented level of violence” (WRM42), “In the spirit of “nationwide resistance to the enemy”, the civil forces of porters and volunteer youths were working hard, day and night, to build traffic ways and transport logistical supplies to the front line (WRM3).

At the same time, the tourist, by reading the wall-texts, tends to make a series of inferences based on their cultural and educational background, according to which they can engage in lexical gradation. If they cannot, they are not able to critically re-analyse a text and interpret it accordingly. If they can do so, they can perceive dissonance and dissect the effect of word-to-text integration.<sup>6</sup> Hence there is the perception of propaganda. On the other hand, the perception of possible ideological bias in discourse, even in tourism discourse, is due to the fact that we are culturally biased. There is no possibility for us to operate a triangulation of culture. We always analyse discourse from an ideologically-biased perspective because we are immersed in the culture we live in. It is true that we can be aware of this, but inevitably, we are influenced by our culture. We may also say that the number of unexpected items is particularly low compared to the overall number of tokens comprising the wall-texts corpus, and that this can render such items as marked. Yet, if we do not critically recognize that our role of investigators always starts from a culturally-biased perspective, we cannot emically and ethically examine the facts.

## 5. Conclusion

Tourism has assumed a more and more relevant role in Vietnam’s economy and society since *doi moi* and taken on an ever more expanding role in society since economic reforms began in the late 1980s. Tourism has indeed developed into a strategic plan for Vietnamese economic growth, thus gearing up to the process of modernization. In this practice, the commodification, representation and consumption of the Vietnamese war is playing a fundamental role (Schwenkel 2006, p. 4). In this process, while the Vietnam war

<sup>5</sup> Since, for the purposes of this study, no socio-semiotic multimodal analysis has been carried out here, it is not the author’s aim to analyze the way in which the wall-text textual and visual components interact. The analysis of the interaction of the two modes will be the scope of a more detailed and in-depth project the author is realizing.

<sup>6</sup> I thank Gloria Cappelli for her helpful discussion and the ideas about word-to-text dissection and interpretation. See also Chilton (2004: 155), who claims that “contextual knowledge must mean historical knowledge” and in particular “(a) access to historical representations stored either in personal memory or in archival memory and (b) what actually is presumed relevant”. This requires metonymic links with representations of the economic system, military institutions, and other elements of the perceived culture of the state(s) under consideration necessary to create the context of what would be expected in (political) discourse.

is sold to Western tourists and visitors, the Vietnamese tourism industry, on the one hand, assumes that “tourist officials and employees have knowledge of the conflict as it has been represented in U.S. history and popular culture”; and on the other hand, it assumes “that visitors will possess a certain level of media, historical, and visual literacy to understand tourist spaces and spectacles” (Schwenkel 2006, p. 7). The Vietnam war, a war which in the history books is presented as a war against communism, is in Vietnam the American war, represented as a fight against imperialism. It is indeed “the war of American aggression” or the “resistance war against the United States” (Gillen 2014, p. 1307), and the WRM proves this with its black-and-white pictures of places destroyed by US bombs positioned side by side with colour pictures of the same rebuilt Vietnamese locations. Since the WRM is a government institution, it is the state that decides what is real and authentic in the WRM. As such, it has authority and credibility, since it is bestowed public and official certification by the state, one which is generally inaccessible to privately run sites (Gillen 2014). Furthermore, national museums such as the WRM are used by states “to solidify their edge in presenting an authentic nation for tourists” (Gillen 2014, p. 1309). According to Alneng (2002, p. 476), for most visitors, the WRM’s representation of the war is not realistic, since there is no realistic representation of time, space and context. This is apparently due to the fact that the receivers of the ideological message of the Vietnamese tourist authorities have the freedom to read ideological messages about their history in a different way (see Eco 1986, p. 138). This diversity results from the elaboration of history and history recreated by films. So, the Vietnam War is what we know because we have studied the history books, and what we know because of what we have seen on the screen, e.g. *Platoon*, *Goodmorning Vietnam*. And the images we see in the WRM are the very same images we have seen in film scenes, and we cannot distinguish between reality and the movie-set. If films are enjoyable, and reality is traumatic, the blending of the two makes the reality more acceptable, to the extent that reality cannot be real but propaganda (Alneng 2002, pp. 476-477).

We think, therefore, that although the corpus is not particularly large, this preliminary analysis of wall-texts may provide a better understanding of the process of communication in the social practice of tourism discourse, and it seems to offer interesting insights and potentialities in this particular field of tourism, in which becoming a tourist inevitably requires the political act of understanding war in peacetime.

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## Annexes

Table 4. List of SemTags found and their meanings

A2.1	Modify, change
A4.2-	General
A5.1-	Evaluation: Bad
A5.2-	Evaluation: False
A5.4-	Evaluation: Unauthentic
A10	Open/closed; Hiding/Hidden; Finding; Showing
B1	Anatomy and physiology
E3-	Violent/Angry
E4.1-	Sad
E5+	Bravery
G2.1-	Crime
G2.2-	Unethical
K6	Children’s games and toys
L1-	Dead
S1.1.1	Social Actions, States And Processes
S1.2.3-	Unselfish
S1.2.6-	Foolish
S6+	Strong obligation or necessity
S6-	No obligation or necessity
S7.1+	In power
S8-	Hindering
S9	Religion and the supernatural
X5.2+	Interested/excited/energetic
X5.2-	Uninterested/bored/unenergetic

Table 5. List of semantic fields found in the WRM wall-texts.

Column 1 indicates the semantic tag (SEM TAG) code, the legend of which is above. Column 2 shows the item found in the SEM TAG with an ideological perspective. Columns 3 and 4 indicate SEM TAG refers to the US and/or its Allies or to Vietnam; the number in the column shows the frequency of the item. The positive or negative sign indicates the positive or negative connotation the item has with reference to the co-text. When no sign is present, the item carries no connotation. The last column offers an excerpt of the SEM TAG.

<i>SemTag</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>US &amp; allies</i>	<i>Vietnam</i>	<i>Sample excerpt</i>
A2.1	obstinately	2 -	//	After the Paris Peace Accord, the U.S. <u>obstinately</u> continued the policy of “Vietnamization of the war”, ordering the Saigon army to carry on with the war by “encroachment and pacification”, trying hard to repress the political forces of patriotic people, opposing the policy of national reconciliation and concord, thus severely violating the Paris Peace Accord. (WRM45)
A4.2-	indiscriminate	1 -	//	Backed up and encouraged by the U.S. administration, the Ngo Dinh Diem regime tried to sabotage the Geneva Agreements systematically, refused to hold consultations on general elections for reunification of the country, made <u>indiscriminate</u> arrests, detentions and killings of patriotic people. (WRM17)

A5.1-	terrible	1 -	2 +	We are reminded of their bravery, of the <u>terrible</u> risks they took, and, of course, constantly, of our own good fortune. (WRM51)
	terribly	1 -	//	“Yet we were wrong, <u>terribly</u> wrong. We owe it to future generations to explain why”. (WRM49)
	shocking	1 -	//	In Vietnam [...] we have written on the pages of history with the indelible ink of U.S. violations of the Geneva Accords of 1954, as well as article after article of the United Nations Charter and even article 1, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States, a sad and <u>shocking</u> chronicle of our repudiation of the rule of law in our foreign policy practices (WRM27)
	severely	1 -	//	[...] thus <u>severely</u> violating the Paris Peace Accord. (WRM45)
A5.2-	fabricated	1 -	//	On 2 August 1964, the U.S. Army <u>fabricated</u> a story about the so-called "Gulf of Tonkin incident" accusing falsely the Navy of Vietnam Democratic Republic of having attacked the U.S. destroyer Maddox to give the U.S. Congress pretext for approving "The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" authorising the U.S. President to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States". (WRM23)
	falsely	1 -	//	On 2 August 1964, the U.S. Army fabricated a story about the so-called "Gulf of Tonkin incident" accusing <u>falsely</u> the Navy of Vietnam Democratic Republic of having attacked the U.S. destroyer Maddox to give the U.S. Congress pretext for approving "The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" authorising the U.S. President to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States". (WRM23)
A5.4-	pretext	1 -	//	On 2 August 1964, the U.S. Army fabricated a story about the so-called "Gulf of Tonkin incident" accusing <u>falsely</u> the Navy of Vietnam Democratic Republic of having attacked the U.S. destroyer Maddox to give the U.S. Congress <u>pretext</u> for approving "The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" authorising the U.S. President to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States". (WRM23)
	pretended	1 -	//	[...] Chinese Nung tribesmen in the service of the U.S. Special Forces <u>pretended</u> to shoot his father, a ruse designed to make the boy reveal information about Communist guerrillas (United Press International). (WRM62)
A10	secretive	//	1 +	Today in Vietnam, one can feel a <u>secretive</u> , inward life that is not visible on the surface and yet is there, all around us. (WRM61)
B1	disembowelled	1 -	//	[...] but the U.S. rangers caught [sic] and stabbed [sic] two (Bui Thi Anh – 10 years and Bui Thi Nguyet – 8 years old), <u>disembowelled</u> one (Bui Van Dan – 6 years old). (WRM71)
E3-	aggression	1 -	//	The French colonialists [...] sent warships to Hai Phong to attack and occupy this port city on 23 November 1946 (photo), thus extending their <u>aggression</u> war to Northern Vietnam. (WRM1)
	aggressive	3 -	//	COLLECTION OF THE U.S. <u>AGGRESSIVE</u> WAR IN VIETNAM (WRM50)
	aggressively	1 -	//	But the more concessions we make, the more <u>aggressively</u> the French colonialists move forward (WRM2)

	barbarous	1 -	//	The situation in Viet Nam poses serious moral problems which are not merely diplomatic or tactical. Our nation is possessed of an immense power. To permit its utilization for unreasonable and <u>barbarous</u> purposes endangers the very foundation of American influence (WRM70)
	cruel	1 -	//	In May 1959, the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem promulgated Law 10/59 authorizing the special military courts to sentence to death on the spot those who were branded as "endangering the national security", in essence, they were patriotic people struggling against the savage and <u>cruel</u> repression of Ngo Dinh Diem (WRM16)
	ferocious	1 -	//	The anti-communist campaign is but a sequence of persecutions which are always <u>ferocious</u> , often bloody (WRM14)
	furious	//	1-	[...] in the most <u>furious</u> close – quarters combat, Castan was shot in the head and killed. (WRM68)
	persecution(s)	1-	//	Ceremony of "drinking blood and swearing to destroy the communists" which was part of the "Anti-communist Denunciation Campaign" launched by Ngo Dinh Diem regime for repression and <u>persecution</u> of the patriotic Vietnamese people. (WRM17)
	threat	2	//	The Government of the United States declares with regard to the afore-said Agreements and paragraphs that: It will refrain from the <u>threat</u> or the use of force to disturb them, in accordance with Article Two, Section Four of the Charter of the United Nations dealing with the obligation of Members to refrain in their international relations from the <u>threat</u> or use of force (WRM25)
	violence	1-	//	Nixon intensified the destruction war in Northern Vietnam at an unprecedented level of <u>violence</u> (WRM42)
	violent	1	//	The photos evoke dual images, not just those of a terrible and <u>violent</u> time and all of the casualties of that war, both civilian and military (WRM51)
E4.1-	desperate	2-	//	Meanwhile in Indochina a <u>desperate</u> war, whose consequences are affecting our vital interests in the Western Pacific, has entered its eighth year. We have largely contributed, in material and money, to the common efforts of France, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (WRM6)
	sad	1-	//	we have written on the pages of history with the indelible ink of U.S. violations of the Geneva Accords of 1954, as well as article after article of the United Nations Charter and even article 1, section 8 of the Constitution of the United States, a <u>sad</u> and shocking chronicle of our repudiation of the rule of law in our foreign policy practices (WRM27)
	tragedy	1-	//	The <u>Tragedy</u> and Lessons of Vietnam (WRM49)
E5+	brave	1	//	We, who were print people, and who dealt only in words and not in images, always knew that the photographers were the <u>brave</u> ones (WRM51)
	bravery	1	//	We are reminded of their <u>bravery</u> , of the terrible risks they took, and, of course, constantly, of our own good fortune. (WRM51)
	daring	//	1	Photographer Tran Binh Khuoi accompanied Viet Cong

				soldiers on <u>daring</u> nighttime raids against South Vietnamese outposts in the Ca Mau Province. (WRM65)
	courageous	1	//	Four of the original twenty-soldiers on the ridge survived, at least two of them due to the inspired action of the <u>courageous</u> photo – journalist from LOOK (WRM68)
G2.1-	murderous	1 -	//	Not contenting themselves with the repressive and <u>murderous</u> U.S.- Ngo Dinh Diem regime, people from all walks of life in South Vietnam gathered together to found the National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam (WRM18)
G.2.2-	unashamedly	1	//	The living rushed <u>unashamedly</u> to the tiny bunkers dug into red clay of the hilltop (WRM69)
K6	puppet	8-	//	Ever since our first violations of the Geneva Accords, starting with the imposition of our first <u>puppet</u> regime in South Vietnam, the Diem regime, we have violated one tenet after another of international law and one treaty obligation after another, and the world knows it. (WRM27)
L1-	massacre	2-	//	This force and SEAL commandos of U.S. Naval Forces perpetrated the Thanh Phong <u>massacre</u> in Kien Hoa province on 25 February 1969, murdering 20 civilians. (WRM31)
	massacred	2-	//	Those suspected to be former "members of the Resistance" were <u>massacred</u> (WRM16)
	murdering	1-	//	Naval Forces perpetrated the Thanh Phong massacre in Kien Hoa province on 25 February 1969, <u>murdering</u> 20 civilians. (WRM31)
S1.1.1	savage	1 -	//	In May 1959, the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem promulgated Law 10/59 authorizing the special military courts to sentence to death on the spot those who were branded as "endangering the national security", in essence, they were patriotic people struggling against the <u>savage</u> and cruel repression of Ngo Dinh Diem (WRM16)
S1.2.3-	unselfish	1	//	In his final moments he was steady, <u>unselfish</u> , shouting to the others that he was hit warning them away. (WRM68)
S1.2.6-	unreasonable	1-	//	The situation in Viet Nam poses serious moral problems which are not merely diplomatic or tactical. Our nation is possessed of an immense power. To permit its utilization for <u>unreasonable</u> and barbarous purposes endangers the very foundation of American influence (WRM70)
S6-	gratuitous	1	//	That is why when the United States decides to give an aid of 400 million dollars to this war. It does not make a <u>gratuitous</u> offer. In reality, we have chosen the least costly means to prevent one of the most terrible things for the United States for its security, its strength and its possibility to obtain what it needs among the riches in Indochina and South-East Asia (WRM6)
S6+	patriotic	//	5+	[...] the Ngo Dinh Diem regime tried to sabotage the Geneva Agreements systematically, refused to hold consultations on general elections for reunification of the country, made indiscriminate arrests, detentions and killings of <u>patriotic</u> people (WRM17)
S7.1+	dictatorial	1 -	//	[...] people from all walks of life in South Vietnam

				gathered together to found the National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam in order to overthrow the dictatorial regime of Ngo Dinh Diem, putting an end to the American intervention (WRM18)
S7.1-	enslaved	1-	//	We would rather sacrifice all than lose our independence and be enslaved (WRM2)
S8-	repressive	1-	//	Not contenting themselves with the <u>repressive</u> and murderous U.S.- Ngo Dinh Diem regime, people from all walks of life in South Vietnam gathered together to found the National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam (WRM18)
	repression	2-	//	Denunciation Campaign" launched by Ngo Dinh Diem regime for repression and persecution of the patriotic Vietnamese people (WRM17)
S9	spirit	1; 1-	2+	In the <u>spirit</u> of "nationwide resistance to the enemy", the civil forces of porters and volunteer youths were working hard day and night to build traffic ways and transport logistical supplies to the front lines (WRM3)
X5.2+	provocative	1-	//	The French colonialist launched incessant provocative actions against the authorities of Vietnam (WRM1)
X5.2-	passively	1	//	There were no easy choices in Vietnam. Every reporter and photographer who worked in the field worried about this one: [...] Pray for a miracle? Fighting back? Try to surrender? Die passively? (WRM68)