

Theater of Rescue: Cultural Representations of U.S. Evacuation from Vietnam

(「救済劇場」：合衆国によるベトナム
撤退の文化表象)

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SUMMARY IN JAPANESE: 本論文は、イラク撤退に関して再び注目を集めたベトナム人「救済」が合衆国の経済的・軍事的・政治的パワーを維持する役割を果たしてきたと考察し、ベトナム人救済にまつわる表象言説を批判的に分析する。合衆国のベトナムからの撤退が、自国と同盟国の扱いをめぐる「劇場」の役割をいかに果たしたのかを明らかにすることをその主眼としている。ここで「劇場」というのは、撤退が単一の歴史的出来事であっただけではなく、その出来事を体験し目撃した人々にとって、歴史と政治が意味をなす舞台として機能したことを問うためである。戦争劇場は失敗に終わったが、合衆国政府が撤退作戦を通じて、救済劇を立ち上げたことの意味は大きい。それゆえ、本論文は、従来の救済言説に立脚せず、撤退にまつわる救済がいかにして立ち上がり、演じられ、表象されたかを「孤児輸送作戦」、難民輸送と中央情報局職員フランク・スネップの回想録を取り上げて分析する。

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It wasn't until months after the fall of Saigon, and much bloodshed, that America conducted a huge relief effort, airlifting more than 100,000 refugees to safety. Tens of thousands were processed at a military base on Guam, far away from the American mainland. President Bill Clinton used the same base to save the lives of nearly 7,000 Kurds in 1996. But if you mention the Guam Option to anyone in Washington today, you either get a blank stare of historical amnesia or hear that "9/11 changed everything."¹

Recently, with the end of the Iraq War, the memory of the evacuation of Vietnamese refugees at the conclusion of the Vietnam War has reemerged as an *exceptional rescue effort*. This perception resonates with previous studies that consider the admission of the refugees as "providing safe harbor for the boat people."² This rescue narrative has been an integral part of U.S. power, justifying its military and political actions. In response, this paper challenges the perception of the U.S. as *rescuing allies*. Moreover, I articulate the U.S. resettlement of Indochinese refugees as a U.S. moral and racial project spanning the end-of-war and post-Vietnam War period.

The refugee operation at the end of the war needs to be examined as an example of how the U.S. government maintained its economic, militaristic and political power in Asia, since the end of the war did not change U.S. domination in Asia and the Pacific. The Ford Administration issued parole authority to some 130,000 refugees between 1975 and 1976, even though Congress was reluctant to agree with the administrative plan for the evacuation of the South Vietnamese.³ Even after the fall of Saigon, there were concerns that the bill's authorization would lead to the reintroduction of U.S. troops in Vietnam.⁴ Despite the unpopularity of the evacuation plan, the iconography of the rescue, such as an image photographed by Hubert Van Es of Americans rescuing the Vietnamese, has been and continues to be a powerful representation of the fall of Saigon (Figure 1). Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger encapsulated the sentiment that helps shape this representation in his memoir on the war: "Twenty years of hope, frustration, and discord over Vietnam had now been reduced to a single objective: to save the maximum number of potential Vietnamese victims from the consequences of America's abandonment."⁵

Figure 1



Helicopter Evacuating Crowd from Rooftop, Hubert Van Es (©Corbis Images)

Figure 2



Evacuation of Saigon, Hubert Van Es (© Corbis Images)

Indeed, the idea that the U.S. “helped” the South Vietnamese escape became the dominant narrative of the war’s end and what is remembered the most by the U.S. public. The image of refugee rescue has overshadowed the fact that many Vietnamese allies were left behind. The image above is the most recognizable image of the Fall of Saigon; for decades, it has been mistakenly described as an American helicopter evacuating people from the roof of the U.S. Embassy.⁶ However, it was taken not at the U.S. Embassy but at the Pittman Apartments, where a CIA station chief and many of his officers lived. The photographer, Hubert Van Es, took the photos on April 29, 1975. He explained the situation:

Looking at the Pittman Apartments, I could see 20 or 30 people on the roof, climbing the ladder to an Air American Huey helicopter. At the top of the ladder stood an American in civilian clothes, pulling people up and shoving them aside. Of course, there was no possibility that all the people on the roof could get into the helicopter, and it took off with 12 or 14 on board. . . . Those who were left on the roof waited for hours, hoping for more helicopters to arrive, to no avail.⁷

The U.S. media usually employs the image in which people were being taken into the helicopter (Figure 1), but not the one in which the helicopter was flying away while people were left on the roof (Figure 2). Why did the messiness of the withdrawal, what Van Es describes as those who were abandoned, fade away? Why did the refugee evacuation emerge as an imperialistic rescue narrative, overshadowing the abandonment of U.S. allies? With those questions in my mind, this paper challenges theatrical representations of the evacuation that display the evacuation as “Americans rescuing Vietnamese.” I am not trying to reveal the bad intentions of the refugee evacuation as an antithesis of the true rescue, or how the Ford Administration created the rescuer image; rather I expose the way the U.S. was able to play the role of savior.

This paper excavates the ways in which the U.S. withdrawal served as a theater for how the country was treating its own forces and allies globally and domestically. Here “theater” means that the evacuation was not a singular historical event but a stage where history and politics made sense for the people who experienced and witnessed the event. This is what Melani

McAlister describes as the process of how the production of a discourse about a space “comes to [be understood] as authoritative, as ‘common sense.’”⁸ This paper also resonates with the ways in which she situates culture as an integral part of politics and history: “Culture is an active part of constructing the narratives that help policy make sense in a given moment.”⁹

Although the end of the Vietnam War needs to be marked as the end of the first televised war as well as the first lost war of the U.S., it was not the conclusion of U.S. involvement in the region but rather the start of U.S. re-involvement in the region in a different form.¹⁰ This was because the theater of war failed but the theater of rescue succeeded. The theater of rescue echoes with a long U.S. history of imperialistic rescue coinciding with its expansion to Asia and the Pacific.¹¹ The Vietnam War continued this liberation myth through the admission of Indochinese refugees, beginning with the refugee evacuation in 1975.¹² The U.S. as a ‘True Rescuer of Freedom’ is not a new obsession in U.S. history, but rather a historically constructed role that the U.S. has continually employed. Thus, the refugee evacuation was not a unique event of history but rather the moment that enabled the U.S. to rely on its rescuer figure, which had existed long before the Vietnam War.

This paper’s task is to critically engage with the depoliticization of the rescue. Few previous studies have employed this perspective in analyzing the Vietnamese refugee evacuation because they considered the refugee evacuation as a humanitarian effort for both those who offered help and those who needed help.¹³ I draw from Wendy Brown’s argument on humanitarianism to help challenge the rescue narrative. She explains that humanitarianism takes the shape of an “antipolitics” which is “a moral discourse centered on pain and suffering rather than political discourse of comprehensive justice.”¹⁴ Emphasizing the urgency of relieving pain, rescue appears as apolitical and provides morality to those who save victims. The moral discourse has not been able to provide radical solutions for those who need them but has supplied justice for those who have power.

In addition to the critique on rescue, I employ Yen Le Espiritu’s framework of “critical refugee studies” to situate the refugee evacuation as a theater by challenging the depoliticization of rescue.¹⁵ This framework requires examining the political situations that created the conditions for refugees in the first place. Espiritu critiques the ways in which previous

studies have discounted the violent roles that the U.S. government, military, and corporations played, arguing that, in fact, they are the ones that generated the refugee exodus in the first place. She explains the mechanism of rescue narrative as follows: “Casting Vietnamese refugees as objects of rescue, this literature [on Vietnamese refugees] portrays them as ‘incapacitated by grief and therefore in need of care’—a care that is purportedly best provided in and by the United States.”¹⁶ This politics of care permeates the racial project to promote the act of U.S. rescue as moral. Espiritu explains that this racialization already occurred during the Vietnam War.¹⁷ This view of racialization of refugees suggests a way of analyzing the refugee evacuation not as a simple operation of rescue or domination of people but rather as complicated power and political dynamics.

With these critical perspectives on images and narratives of rescue, I challenge the conventional portrayal of the refugee evacuation at the end of the Vietnam War as a simple apolitical act. Instead of examining the refugee evacuation as a rescue, I show how the evacuation was staged, performed and represented. To do so, firstly, I analyze “Operation Babylift” and the evacuation of Vietnamese refugees as not only crucial military operations at the end of the war that served to avert the attention of the U.S. public from the defeat, but also as cultural representations that enabled the U.S. to play the rescuer role in order to prove U.S. benevolence. Operation Babylift was the military action that airlifted a couple of thousand Vietnamese orphans at the end of the war. Evacuations of orphans and refugees were not solely government operations but rather involved various actors such as orphanages and American civilians who wished to help children and refugees. Consequently, the operations turned out more complicated than the Ford Administration originally planned. Secondly, by investigating Frank Snepp’s story of the end of the Vietnam War, I demonstrate how the end of the war has been re-narrated as the moment when the possibility of rescue existed. Frank Snepp was a CIA agent who was in Vietnam at the time of the end of the war and who abandoned his ex-girlfriend and his alleged child. Showing how his stories of abandonment indicate an American desire for tragedy and a relentless haunting of American guilt, this point exposes the ways in which the possibility of rescue enabled the American public to deal with its failure.

1. Evacuation of Orphans and Friends: Creating a “Humanitarian” Mission

During the evacuation of non-essential U.S. personnel and the South Vietnamese who supported U.S. government policy, on the brink of the collapse of South Vietnam, the U.S. aid to South Vietnam had both actual and symbolic meaning.¹⁸ However, it was not only the aid but the actual bodies that had symbolic and political value when it came down to the evacuation from Saigon. For an honorable evacuation, the evacuation of Vietnamese orphans and friends became an integral part of the operation for the Ford Administration. In this section, I analyze the ways in which Operation Babylift and the administrative decision to evacuate Vietnamese refugees emerged as U.S. moral and humanitarian missions.

Operation Babylift: U.S. Militarism and the Rescue Operation for Asian Babies

As a symbolic rescue operation during the American evacuation, the Ford Administration executed Operation Babylift from April 3 to April 28, 1975. At an interagency meeting, Chairman Daniel Parker of the Agency of International Development (AID) decided that the U.S. would airlift a couple of thousand Vietnamese orphans on April 1, 1975.¹⁹ By April 28, some 2,700 children had been flown to the U.S. via the operation.²⁰ This operation is still controversial because many of the children were not orphans; some had mothers or families who wanted to send their children to the U.S. for their safety (or merely put them in an orphanage with the intent of coming back for their children).²¹ Although the operation did not gain as much public support as the administration originally expected, it still provided enough attention to symbolize itself as a rescue mission.²²

The concept of the operation is embedded in the idea of U.S. humanitarian militarism. For instance, the idea of establishing orphanages in Vietnam was an expansion of U.S. humanitarian programs from Japan to Vietnam. When they visited Tokyo on a government-sponsored goodwill tour in 1959, Sara O’Meara and Yvonne Feddersen launched a nonprofit organization called “International Orphans, Incorporated” to support Japanese-American children in Japan.²³ Congress recognized their work in Japan and honored them. At that occasion, General Wallace M. Green, the

commandant of the Marine Corps, asked them to “do the same thing with the half-American, half-Vietnamese orphans in Vietnam.”²⁴ Accordingly, O’Meara and Fedderson established five orphanages in Vietnam with the help of the U.S. Armed Forces.²⁵

This transport of orphanages for children fathered by Americans from Japan to Vietnam exposes the fact that the orphans in both countries are indeed the byproduct of U.S. militarism in Asia. Certainly, as this originates from militarism and the exploitation of women, it is not only a problem for the U.S.²⁶ For instance, Japan also had Japanese-fathered children throughout Asia and the Pacific. However, the government of Japan did not recognize them as Japanese to provide any legal privilege for them, except for the children (both of whose parents were Japanese) who were left in China after WWII (Japanese orphans in China).²⁷ However, the U.S. government, on the other hand, according to Yukiko Koshiro, “was highly concerned that half-American children might become a source of anti-Americanism abroad” and began to “solve” the problem through an overseas adoption plan after WWII.²⁸ This was because the U.S. government saw American-fathered children as America’s responsibility.²⁹ For the government, the matter of abandoned American-fathered children was a threat to the image of the American military, since the abandonment of children would be recognized as the irresponsible and immoral actions of U.S. military men. The U.S. government considered the individual actions of military men as a national responsibility because they belonged to the military. This is why it decided to allocate special immigration status to American-fathered children through the Amerasian Act of 1982 and the Homecoming Act of 1988.³⁰ Both acts were passed during the Reagan Administration to take responsibility for Amerasian children in Asia.³¹

Hence, I argue that the concept of orphanage for mixed children exemplifies an aspect of U.S. militarism in Asia. The children who were called “Amerasian”—children of American service men and Asian mothers—were common products of not only U.S. bases in Asia but also of the history of U.S. colonialism, occupation, and wars in Asia (famously the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Thailand). The normative social construction of such orphans as innocent and objects of compassion and love obfuscates the violence and desire that generated them in the first place.³² Moreover, the discourse of helping orphans signals the U.S. as the only benevolent

subject in the world that treats them humanely. By contrast, Asia always emerges as an exclusionist that turns children into orphans and handles them cruelly. Not only is it the fault of Asian women who cannot look after them but also of the Asian societies that cannot protect them. In this logic, Asian women and Asian societies are represented as improper and lacking subjects that cannot play their expected normative gendered roles of caring parents. By emphasizing the U.S. as a nation of immigrants and Asian countries as discriminatory, this view still prevails.³³ I claim that the concept of the orphanage embodies these racialized and gendered ideas that regard Asian women as bad mothers and Asian societies as prejudiced.

In this way, at the end of the Vietnam War Operation Babylift maintained the representation of the U.S. as a moral liberal nation, and the administration hoped this sense of morality would change the public's opinion regarding additional aid to South Vietnam. For example, the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, Graham Martin, "stressed that this evacuation along with the millions of refugees abandoning Communist-controlled zones, will help create a shift in American public opinion in favor of the Republic of Vietnam. Especially when these children land in the United States, they will be subject to television, radio and press agency coverage and the effect will be tremendous."³⁴ He saw the efficacy of the operation because refugee children would be represented as innocent victims of wretched communism, enabling the administration to obtain additional aid to South Vietnam. Even with the tragedy of the C-5A airlift crash that killed close to 200 Vietnamese babies and children, the Ford Administration continued operations to create sympathy for South Vietnam and to soften public opinion about emergency aid.³⁵ In other words, the administration saw the evacuation as an opportunity to mobilize public opinion to smooth over the situation.

Figure 3



Operation Babylift (photo from the Gerald R. Ford Library)

Perhaps one of the most symbolic moments was on April 5, 1975, when President Ford greeted incoming orphans and was pictured holding a baby when the flight arrived in San Francisco.³⁶ Photographs of the president holding a baby at a moment of imminent danger for South Vietnam represented the U.S. as a father and savior by implying that the U.S. was a safe space for the rescued babies. President Ford was able to portray himself as a rescuer in the image above by participating in a well-organized and calculated photo-op in which he held a Vietnamese baby. Being in the center of the picture, President Ford himself is the one seen gently holding a baby who had just arrived. Everyone surrounding them is supporting the act, which is one of benevolence to welcome. This image racializes and genderizes the U.S. as a white man and South Vietnam as an Asian baby who needs to be protected. The baby in the frame represents a powerless object of rescue. The image justifies the displacement of her/him as a necessary procurement and the act of dislocation as a celebratory rescue.

The operation was not just for obtaining aid from Congress but also for disguising the evacuations of Americans and Vietnamese by directing attention to the orphans as the true rescue mission.³⁷ To do so, the administration especially needed orphans because they were symbols of U.S. militarism and their evacuation would represent a humanitarian aspect. By doing so, Operation Babylift became the theater of rescue in which President Ford was exhibited as a father of those orphans. Although some Vietnamese filed a class action lawsuit against people from the State Department to argue that the detention of Vietnamese children was unconstitutional, evacuation of these children labeled orphans helped to represent the withdrawal as a rescue mission. The operation represented U.S. politics of care for children in Asia, which Laura Briggs calls “secular salvation theology”; this has enabled the U.S. to play a rescuer figure in Asia.³⁸

Evacuation of Friends?

With orphans, “friends’ bodies” were also used to signify the power and benevolence of the U.S. As Denise da Silva elucidates, those “friends”—such as Iraqi and Vietnamese refugees—are the “others of Europe” who emerged “to the geopolitico necessities of a particular historical moment.”³⁹ As she reminds us, the U.S. utilizes the illusion of responsibility to turn certain groups of people into friends. This friend figure has been significant for the U.S. to fight the Cold War because it defines the U.S. as a true and sole rescuer and a figure of freedom.

This was why it was important for Henry Kissinger to rescue friends at that moment. Kissinger claimed that “we cannot abandon friends in one part of the world [Indochina] without jeopardizing the security of friends everywhere . . . the problem we face in Indochina is an elementary question of what kind of people we are. . . . For fifteen years we have been involved in encouraging the people of Vietnam to defend themselves against what we conceive as external danger.”⁴⁰ Playing the rescuer role had a significant meaning for the administration because it would deflect negative images of the U.S. along the themes of abandonment, loss, and escape, by representing the withdrawal as an act of rescue and differentiating it from an act of war. This was why the refugee evacuation was not a legal obligation but rather a moral obligation to *rescue* the Vietnamese.

More importantly, the rescuer figure was not only a matter of the U.S.

and South Vietnam, but also a matter of “the security of friends everywhere.” Kissinger considered how the sudden collapse of South Vietnam would affect the position of the U.S. within a global context. Thus, from the early stage of evacuation, Kissinger proposed to help the South Vietnamese: “We have spent millions of dollars over the past ten years so that the North Vietnamese could tear up South Vietnam. I think we owe—it’s our duty—to get the people who believed in us out.”⁴¹ Helping out those who believed in the U.S. was deemed inevitable because the U.S. was obliged to do so. This kind of action transformed the withdrawal into a *rescue* mission. It also helped to moralize the whole U.S. evacuation because Kissinger believed that it was important to carry out the evacuation “not” in the “context of a bug out.”⁴² Since the cause of the Vietnam War, Southeast Asia’s importance, originated from security fears that were often described in “domino” metaphors, U.S. evacuation mattered for future U.S. policy in Asia.⁴³

Kissinger did not want to present the defeat in the war as the defeat of U.S. policy. He maintained his desire to prevent curtailment of U.S. foreign policy:

There is nothing we can do about the past, but it is important how we react to this. Will we withdraw? Will we give up our commitments and our leadership? The worst mistake we could make now is to say we are undertaking a global reassessment. What we are seeing [in] Vietnam are special circumstances of a commitment that was perhaps unwisely entered into, circumstances of executive weakness here, and so on, none of which could be predicted. To generalize from this would be disastrous in all areas. There can be a domino effect not related to Vietnam but to our competence in foreign policy. We must conduct our foreign policy with confidence and assurance, reiterating our commitments.⁴⁴

Kissinger did not want to project the withdrawal as a U.S. military defeat or as a failed policy since that kind of perception would lead to the reduction of U.S. military power and would damage U.S. foreign policy at large.⁴⁵ He also claimed “the worst conclusion we could draw is to conclude that the design of our foreign policy is wrong and needs reordering.”⁴⁶ To maintain the U.S. power structure in Asia, Kissinger argued that they needed to keep

U.S. policy the same, regardless of its failure. This indicates that people like Kissinger did not see any defects in the policy and imposed their own beliefs in democracy, liberty, and coalitions among anti-communist governments in Asia.

In this context, the significance of the evacuation of friends was deeply intertwined with U.S. militarism and policy in Asia, since the accomplishment of the evacuation would reflect the credibility of U.S. leadership in Asia. For instance, General George Brown remarked that “people wonder if we will turn our backs on Asia. The main question is what we will do about Asia.”⁴⁷ His statement shows American paternalistic attitudes towards Asia. Brown saw it as an American responsibility to maintain an American presence. In this understanding, Asia is a place where the U.S. government guides and leads. This is a U.S. mapping of the world which considers the Pacific as an “American lake,” and part of East Asia and Southeast Asia as not legal American territory but extraterritorial jurisdiction that the U.S. could utilize as U.S. outposts of empire.⁴⁸ This is why a summary of the State Department’s evacuation options concluded that it was necessary to evacuate Vietnamese because “(1) we have a moral obligation to do so and, (2) the rest of the world will be watching to see how the U.S. deals with the people of a country which has long been involved with us.”⁴⁹ The State Department viewed the U.S. evacuation as a symbol of U.S. foreign policy that would affect future U.S.-Asia relations.

However, how to fund the evacuation was controversial even among the administration. Kissinger began just focusing on humanitarian aid and suggested that President Ford ask Congress only for this type of aid: “I must say it would be popular to say we have done enough. Give only humanitarian aid, negotiate with North Vietnam to take out those who want to go, and say if the North won’t agree, we will do it by force. You could couple it with a statement saying it was a bad defeat, and we need a bigger defense budget because it’s a dangerous world, and we need the Turkey money.”⁵⁰ As long as they attained humanitarian aid, Kissinger would be satisfied to execute the evacuation of Americans and some Vietnamese. Believing that they would not get military aid for South Vietnam, he was looking for a way to deal with the defeat.

Nonetheless, the President opposed his idea because it went “against [his] grain.”⁵¹ He also claimed that “if the Congress want[s] to vote this

way, then the efforts of five Presidents, 55,000 dead, and five Congressional efforts are in vain.”⁵² Since the President really wanted to represent the war as a meaningful endeavor, the U.S. could not just leave Vietnam. Ford believed that the policy on Vietnam was right and that he needed to fight for it as long as he could.⁵³ President Ford thought if he did not ask Congress for the military aid, it would prove that U.S. policy on Vietnam was wrong.⁵⁴ This is why President Ford asked Congress for \$722 million for military and humanitarian aid on April 10, 1975. He stated:

I hereby pledge in the name of the American people that the United States will make a maximum humanitarian effort to help, care for and feed these helpless victims. And now I ask the Congress to clarify immediately its restrictions on the use of U.S. military forces in Southeast Asia for the limited purposes of protecting American lives by ensuring their evacuation, if this should be necessary. And I also ask prompt revision of the law to cover those Vietnamese to whom we have a very special obligation and whose lives may be endangered should the worst come to pass.⁵⁵

This “obligation” was supposed to provide the U.S. government a just reason to deploy force for an evacuation. President Ford could not give up the military aid for South Vietnam.

The President’s fixation on military aid derived from two strategic military values of the refugees. The first one was that the evacuation of the refugees would facilitate and secure the evacuation of Americans. The second was of one political symbolic value: to show the U.S. as a moral subject that would “save some South Vietnamese,” in order to gain public support for U.S. policy and U.S. credibility in Asia. On April 15, since the possibility of getting the aid that President Ford requested was viewed as slim, the administration discussed what should happen if this were to occur. Because the administration knew that the collapse of South Vietnam was inevitable, Kissinger suggested that they “send [Graham] Martin in and say we would like to save as many South Vietnamese as possible.”⁵⁶ However, this kind of suggestion was controversial since some of the Senators had already expressed concern regarding the evacuation of Vietnamese. Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho) opposed the idea of a great number of Vietnamese

evacuees because it “could involve us in a large war.” He stated, “This raises the specter of a new war, thousands of American troops holding on in an enclave for a long period.”⁵⁷ Senator Biden (D-Delaware) also maintained that “I will vote for getting the Americans out. I don’t want it mixed with getting the Vietnamese out.”⁵⁸ The plan for the Vietnamese evacuation was deemed unacceptable because it was different from what the Senators had envisioned. Senator John Glenn (D-Ohio) expressed, “I and most Senators thought of a surgical extraction, not of a ten-day to two-week operation with a bridgehead.”⁵⁹ They strongly desired an Americans-only evacuation operation.

Thus, Kissinger rationalized the evacuation of Vietnamese as a requirement, claiming that “to get all Americans out safely, we will need to take out at least some Vietnamese.”⁶⁰ This kind of comment, on the one hand, justified the evacuation of Vietnamese to secure the evacuation of American bodies. On the other hand, he disguised his desire to exploit the bodies of Vietnamese to signify the operation as one of rescue. In this way, evacuation of some Vietnamese with Americans was rationalized to uphold the morality of the American evacuation from Vietnam, while the evacuation of the Vietnamese was verified as playing a supplemental role to hold up the politically symbolic value of the American withdrawal. Accordingly, in the discussion on the target number of Vietnamese the U.S. would aim to rescue, Kissinger mentioned that “this [number] doesn’t mean we can [actually] get them out.”⁶¹ This superficial worth of the Vietnamese contradicts the idea of *rescue of friends* and the concept of friend as an equal status person who has trust and affection. Therefore, a friend in this sense was a less essential person to the U.S. (because s/he was legally, racially and culturally different), yet significant enough to help represent the evacuation as a U.S. rescue mission.

Although the Ford Administration could not control and purify the image of the end of the war as well-organized, I assert that administrative efforts to execute “honorably withdrawal” enabled it to deflect the messiness of American military failure in the region and shift the focus to the act of rescue. Although South Vietnamese bodies were not fully visible during the evacuation, they were displayed as those who had to be rescued because the South Vietnamese were the true victims of the war, not the Americans. A crying child image, which was shown in *Time Magazine* on April 14, 1975, can be seen as an example.

An image of a victim who is crying for help is unquestioningly employing the rhetoric of the American moral obligation to South Vietnam. In her book, *Purity and Exile*, Liisa Malkki explains how the refugee image appears “as a singularly expressive emissary of horror and powerlessness” in a humanitarian context.⁶² Situating refugees as powerless, humanitarian discourse generates the need for “a certain kind of protection.”⁶³ Discourse which situates refugees as powerless “otherizes” them as non-heteronormative subjects.⁶⁴ Moreover, Laura Briggs argues that an image of need, which usually emerges as an impoverished mother-with-child, has mobilized ideologies of rescue. She writes: “it has played a powerful role in shaping popular support in the USA for a variety of public policy and foreign policy initiatives.”⁶⁵ Certain visual images of a particular body, such as the crying refugee child, became a trope of the need for rescue and care. The image of a refugee seeking help validated the act of rescuing those who were fleeing their countries (not only South Vietnam but also Cambodia and Laos), even though the administration’s original plan was to evacuate only “high risk” South Vietnamese. Claiming “moral obligation” enabled the Ford Administration to be a rescuer at that moment, but at the same time, because it assumes a universal idea of rescue, the administration could not be selective. This explains why President Ford wanted to help all refugees who fled the region, emphasized the successes of the evacuation and viewed refugees as evidence of the righteousness of U.S. policy by locating it in the history of admittance of the Hungarians and the Cubans.⁶⁶

2. Un-savable South Vietnam

Although the evacuation did not turn out to be the total chaos the Ford Administration feared, the fact of U.S. abandonment of South Vietnam remains. Instead of revealing the U.S. failure of withdrawal, the abandonment story at the end of the war has been circulating as a “tragic story” emphasizing the possibility of rescue.⁶⁷ Here, I assert that American guilt for the abandonment of the people of former Indochina did not simply disappear given the administrative official rescue narratives of evacuation and resettlement. Instead, I claim that American guilt necessitated a tragedy to justify what happened by elucidating that the war was out of American

control. Furthermore, the trope of tragedy served also to obscure the U.S. origins of such bereavement. Moreover, tragedy is used to regain whiteness by subjectifying the American (white) man as the moral subject.⁶⁸ The tragic love story has to be analyzed in this gender discourse because such discourse engenders the feminization and emasculation of (South) Vietnam.⁶⁹ Thus, in this section, I analyze the tragic story of CIA agent Frank Snepp at the end of the Vietnam War, not just to critique the rescue narrative but to reveal the ways in which the representation of the end of the war has functioned as a theater of rescue. It exposes Snepp's and America's desire to fill the void of abandonment through the un-savable body of Mai Ly and South Vietnam.

Haunting Guilt

Frank Snepp's true story of the loss of his girlfriend and his son circulated through his books and his articles and in the U.S. media for many years as "the worst of the tragic stories of the last day of Saigon."⁷⁰ Examining his story with similar stories illustrates not only Snepp's desire to justify his actions but also American national exploitation of Vietnamese bodies. It has the same consumerism of *Miss Saigon*. These two stories possess striking resemblance in the portrayals of Kim in *Miss Saigon* and Mai Ly in Frank Snepp's story, because both characters are prostitutes, had kid(s) with American men, and killed themselves. The analogy between the two stories is not a coincidence but rather an inevitable narrative of the American/Western experience in Vietnam as tragedy. I claim it discloses an American/Western sense of ownership of Asia. Here, I critique the tragic love story of Frank Snepp and *Miss Saigon* as what Christina Klein calls "Cold War Orientalism." This is a kind of Orientalism that emerged especially during the Cold War, in which the U.S. historically produced and consumed Asia. Thus, U.S. cultural production that takes Asia as subject matter has to be understood as part of and related to U.S. political, military and economic expansion in Asia.⁷¹

Miss Saigon, a musical written by French playwrights Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil, whose story is based on the opera *Madame Butterfly*, has been reinforcing stereotypical images of Asian woman as sexy, suffering, and suicidal.⁷² Kim in *Miss Saigon* repeats the figure of the hypersexualized Asian woman, as Cio-Cio San in *Madame Butterfly*, as she fell in love with the American man Chris during the Vietnam War and had a

boy. Because Kim found out that her future-husband already was married to an American woman and she could not go to the U.S. with him, she killed herself in the end.⁷³

I read Kim's suicide as a murder by the West because the story cannot end without her death. Because she killed herself by her own hands, the West/audience does not have to get their own hands dirty. Kim's suicide represents the erasure of an Asian female body from the present and future to contain her within the guilty/painful past. Kim's suicide justifies the past wrongs of the West as an exceptional tragic story, and her death overshadows the violence of the West, reducing her pain to merely a heartbreaking love story. Consequently, by excluding Kim's body from a white family, *Miss Saigon* functions as entertainment that allows the West to forget its past immoral acts (colonialism, imperialism and militarism). *Miss Saigon*, therefore, exemplifies Western desire to recuperate the morality of the West through white love (between a white husband and wife).

CIA agent Frank Snepp's real experience also exposes the same desire for a recuperation of morality and a mending of the past. Nonetheless, there are three different versions of Snepp's experience. Changes in details and settings expose not only his politics of memory but also his haunting guilt. In the book that Snepp originally published in 1977, he described the story on Mai Ly (although he does not mention on her name) differently:

Around midmorning a Chinese girl, an old acquaintance, called to ask my help. Her American husband had abandoned her and her children, she explained tearfully; she had no one else to call on but me. I told her wearily I could do nothing at the moment. I was chained to my desk. "But contact me again in an hour," I said. "I'll see what I can do." There was a brief silence on the other end of the line. Then her voice drifted in, cool and distant. "If you won't help me," she said, "I'm a dead woman. I'll kill myself and my children. I've already bought the pills." I glanced at the papers piled high in front of me. Polgar wanted something written, another useless analysis, as soon as possible. No, I could not break away. "Look," I said, "just phone in an hour. I'll help you then."

Precisely on schedule, an hour later, she called again. As it happened, I was away from my desk. She left a message with the duty

officer: “I would have expected better of you. Goodbye.” That was the last I heard from her.⁷⁴

Here Snapp does not appear as caring. In his book, *Irreparable Harm* that was published in 1999, Snapp explains the differences in his accounts: “In an earlier book I told a story that is recounted here, concerning a woman I call Mai Ly, but did not provide precise details of her life and passing out of a sense of guilt that has taken years to overcome.”⁷⁵ Even if he tried to hide her from official retribution by changing her into a Chinese girl in his first book, it does not erase the fact of his abandonment of her and her children. Mai Ly did not have anyone but Snapp to rely on and she was threatening her and her children’s lives. Mai Ly was betting their lives to attain Snapp’s assistance. In this original version, Snapp is guiltier of not helping her than in other versions.

Moreover, she was abandoned twice in the story, first by her husband and then by Snapp. Rather than being innocent or caring he appears irresponsible and merciless in this story because rescuing her was not a compelling force for him. Additionally, he said that “I could do nothing at the moment.” As Snapp missed Mai Ly’s second call, he could not do anything but accept the fact that she might have killed herself. Consequently, the phrase by Mai Ly “I would have expected better of you. Goodbye” has a different connotation that simple separation/blame. This is not just an accusation but a bitter farewell for Snapp and the U.S., because “you” could have done better but “you” did not do so. In disappointment, she rejected his presence with her “goodbye.” As a result, Snapp no longer stands in for the moral subject or rescuer but signifies a killer in this version. He could not prove worthy of her trust and he abandoned Mai Ly and her son.

Nonetheless, the story that appeared in *Newsweek* on the 25th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon is different from the account mentioned earlier:

The statuesque, almost six-foot-tall Mai Ly had been a hostess in a dive where prostitutes sold “Saigon tea” and their bodies to the round-eyes, Snapp would later write. Snapp’s romance with Mai Ly had been on again, off again, until she disappeared in 1973. Almost two years later she showed up at Snapp’s door—holding a baby she claimed was theirs.

At first Snapp was not sure what to believe, though today he accepts paternity of the child, a boy. He hangs on to a photograph of Mai Ly looking regal in a skin-tight dress, while he awkwardly holds the baby like a fragile and foreign object. Shortly after that photo was taken, Mai Ly and the child vanished again, only to resurface the day before the final evacuation of Saigon. “Call back in an hour, I’ll be glad to help,” Snapp told her over the phone that afternoon when she called, begging for an exit visa for herself and the child. But when he got back to his desk more than an hour later, there was only a message for him from the woman. It read: “I would have expected better of you.”⁷⁶

This account narrates a “prostitute” that desperately needed Snapp’s help but could not be rescued. In this version, she showed her disappointment in him not helping her. Readers of the article can read Snapp’s abandonment of Mai Ly as the abandonment of South Vietnam. He (the U.S.) wanted to help her (South Vietnam), but he could not do it, and he had to leave at the end. In this way, Snapp is not the completely irresponsible one, as he was willing to help, because Mai Ly was an un-savable body, a prostitute. Accordingly, the article feminizes South Vietnam as a perfunctory prostitute who sought help only at the end. This is apparent when the article exceptionalizes the “death of Mai Ly” as the only terrible event during the last days of Saigon:

By the last week of April Snapp was strung out and edgy, no longer sleeping more than a couple of hours a night. With his fellow spooks, he was helping to run a “black” airlift, using forged documents to spirit out South Vietnamese friends aboard the agency’s secret airline, known by its cover name, Air America. At the same time, he was writing intelligence reports trying to convince the ambassador that the end was near. But, a quarter century later, the excuse that Snapp was too busy no longer suffices to quiet his guilty conscience over the death of Mai Ly.⁷⁷

Although he was “too busy” dealing with the situation to help her, he had been trying his best to assist other Vietnamese. The other Vietnamese whom Snapp needed to rescue were saved and only Mai Ly (and her child) was left behind. Consequently, the story narrates that he did not mean to fail to

rescue her, but he had no other choice. Emphasizing the “conscience” over her death underscores his morality as an American who was also responsible for the fate of South Vietnam; the representation of Snepp is one of an innocent do-gooder. The U.S. plays a redemptive masculine savior (moral man) and South Vietnam plays feminine sinner (prostitute) who needed to be salvaged. While he failed to play the savior role, as Mai Ly’s prostitute figure was the property of Snepp, his missed opportunity of rescuing her does not completely lay blame on him but rather narrates the story as a tragedy. This relationship between Mai Ly and Snepp, and by extension between Vietnam and the U.S., can be read as a repetition of the relationship between Kim and Chris in *Miss Saigon* and Cio-Cio San and Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*.

Mai Ly and their son’s deaths cannot be fully consumed like Kim’s suicide, because unlike a performance of *Miss Saigon* Snepp’s life goes on as an American who was in Vietnam. The article in *Newsweek* also narrates the aftermath as a story of Snepp surviving with his loss: “Snepp, now a producer for the syndicated show ‘Extra,’ went back to Saigon in 1991. As he walked past the seedy tenement where he had stayed with Mai Ly, he realized that their son, had he lived, would have been 18 years old.”⁷⁸ His son never died in his imagination but continues to grow up. “What would have been” is always contrasts with “what has been.” The contrast always invokes in him a regret that there was a chance to make his reality “what would have been.” In Snepp’s case, it was the possibility of the rescue. He has to deal with his loss. Loss of Mai Ly, a child, and Vietnam haunt him and always impede the successful rescue story of the U.S.

The newest version of Snepp’s memoir of Mai Ly narrates not helping her as his worst failure during the last days in Saigon:

About forty-eight hours before the end I got a call from a Vietnamese woman I had had an on-and-off relationship with since my first year in Vietnam. She had disappeared from the city in 1973. Near the end of 1974 she showed up at my door with a year-old baby boy. I believe it was my own child. So just before the collapse she called and said, “You’ve got to evacuate me because the Communists will kill me for running around with an American and having an American child.” I was working on another report for the ambassador so I said, “Look Mai Ly, call me back in an hour. I’ll do what I can to get you out of

the country.” She said, “You better because if you don’t I’m going to kill myself and this child.” She called back in an hour or so and I was briefing the ambassador and missed the call. On the last day I saw a police man who knew her and asked him to go find out where she was. He sent word back to me that she had killed herself and the kid. I’ve never been able to verify it, but as I came off the roof of the embassy I was overwhelmed with this numbing guilt.⁷⁹

In this account, Mai Ly was asking Snapp for his help because she was scared about how the Communists might treat her for what she had done and she needed to escape the country. Although Snapp was ready to help her, he could not reach her. The story depicts that Snapp missing her call brought the sad end of Mai Ly and their child. In this way, Snapp does not take full responsibility for their deaths and unconsciously lessens his guilt, as he had to deal with other stuff. Moreover, dramatizing his role as could-be-rescuer-turned-out-to-be-abandoner, his story illustrates the possibility of rescue. Since he never confirmed Mai Ly and her child’s deaths or whereabouts after the evacuation, Snapp has been exploiting Mai Ly and her son’s possible deaths to depict the fall of Saigon as the worst personal tragedy of his memory.

I read Snapp’s re-narration of the Chinese girl into a “Vietnamese prostitute” in later versions as his desire to dramatize the fall of Saigon as his most “tragic moment” in the Vietnam War. I am not interested in whether Mai Ly is Chinese or Vietnamese. Rather I am concerned with the ways in which Snapp illustrates his story differently each time and how the story was received as a tragic story of the end of the war. It is unjustifiable to narrate her over and over as the last terrible moment of the Vietnam War to symbolize his regret, shame, and sorrow. Like Kim’s suicide at the end of *Miss Saigon*, the suicide of Mai Ly signifies the end of the Vietnam War for Frank Snapp. However, his guilt about not letting her and their son out of the country did not end like in *Miss Saigon*, where the audience could go out of the theater and return home to live their lives. In the case of Snapp, the memory of Mai Ly and their son does not go away but rather keeps coming back.

However, changes in Snapp’s original narrative into his “most tragic story” reveals not only his desire but that of the American public to believe

in the possibility of rescue. They also divulge Snepp's narcissism because by telling his story as a tragedy he represents himself as a moral subject. According to Sigmund Freud, narcissism is a form of behavior that the libido, having been withdrawn from the external world, channels into the ego.⁸⁰ Ego is the part of the psychic apparatus that experiences and reacts to the outside world and thus mediates between the primitive drives of the id and the demands of the social and physical environment. The fact that Snepp's story was perceived as the "most tragic story" also revealed a collective narcissism surrounding the Vietnam War since to consume the event as a tragedy was to channel the libido into the ego. His narration functions to lessen his guilt and shame, because he justifies the abandonment of Mai Ly (South Vietnam) by emphasizing an out-of-control (tragic) situation. I claim that turning the loss of the war into a "tragic death" to mourn is the consumption of the event and about self-preservation. Her death represents American abandonment but overshadows the U.S. military violence in the region by implying the helplessness of the situation and the desire of rescue.

Yet, his effort of re-narrating the event as a tragedy between him and Mai Ly (through the differences in the stories) exposes not only his failure to rescue her but also his obsession with re-narrating the story as his climactic event in Vietnam. His fixation on Mai Ly suggests that he has been attempting to punish himself by revealing his action to seek forgiveness. Since Snepp repetitively represents Mai Ly as an un-savable body, his way of reaching mercy is to rationalize the impossibility of the rescue. Since Snepp's story served as a self-pity-fantasy of rescue, it ironically provides the never-ending (im)possibility of rescue. Accordingly, Snepp cannot be an innocent moral subject but a bearer of the impossible rescue. In this way, the death of Mai Ly symbolizes his pain in the American evacuation from Vietnam yet enables the American public to consume his story as a tragedy.

Conclusion

As I have shown, the American evacuation from Vietnam was staged, performed and represented as a theater of rescue not only at the immediate end of the war but also months and years afterwards. Images of the rescue, in particular, circulated through political and cultural mediums at the end

of the war and its aftermath. Indeed, images of orphans arriving safely in the U.S. through Operation Babylift and the final evacuation by a helicopter with a queue of people worked to overshadow other scenes like the crash of C-5A in Operation Babylift and the chaos and mess in evacuations from Hue, Da Nang and Nha Trang. Although the end of the war was a moment of crisis for the U.S., since the evacuation was performed as a rescue event, the evacuation image of Americans helping Vietnamese became distinguished from the acts of war.

A confluence of factors represented the American evacuation as a theater of rescue. Even though the administration stressed the evacuation of the Vietnamese as a rescue, it was extremely unpopular in U.S. society at large in April 1975 and U.S. popular media did not overtly praise it.⁸¹ Nonetheless, the media did not openly criticize the administrative decision to receive the refugees either. This was because admitting refugees was also understood as an inevitable result because the U.S. had set a precedent in other international crises.⁸² In the same vein, an article in the *Los Angeles Times* claimed that the U.S. did not have any choice but to accept the refugees, since accepting refugees is a U.S. tradition.⁸³ Accordingly, the South Vietnamese became “the newest Americans.” The article also claimed: “Nothing can be done for the dead of Vietnam, for the future, healing war’s wound.”⁸⁴ Admitting the refugees, in this sense, is externalizing the wounds of the war and projecting them onto refugees’ bodies. The U.S. can cure wounds by making the refugees into Americans. In this way, admission of the refugees is the act of ending the war and starting the liberation.

The fear of an influx of Indochinese refugees into the U.S. was rationalized because the rescue of the refugees was represented as an unavoidable moral act. This explains why the government saw the Indochinese as a peril to American society and they were dispersed throughout the U.S. to assimilate faster.⁸⁵ Bill Ong Hing reminds us that the U.S. desire to control the Vietnamese was based on racial fear and the desire to control Asian immigration to the U.S.⁸⁶ Since the U.S. maintained its position as a rescuer in Asia and the Pacific through the “refugee rescue,” the logic of American civilization was not totally discredited. In the end, the refugees themselves had to deal with this discrepancy between the morality of rescue and the impossibility of rescue because rescue was not ideal liberation for them as they lost their homeland, but they had to resettle in a third country and start

their lives again far away from home. They were the ones who were forced to endure this contradictory reality of rescue and survival.

Notes

1. The “Guam Option” refers to the use of Guam as a staging area for refugees, to resettle them to the U.S. mainland. Kirk W. Johnson, “In Iraq, Abandoning Our Friends,” *New York Times*, December 15, 2011.
2. Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America’s Half-Open Door, 1945 to the Present* (New York; London: Free Press; Collier Macmillan, 1986).
3. The bill, called “the Vietnam Emergency Relief Act,” which authorized \$327 million for evacuation from South Vietnam and for “humanitarian aid,” was passed by the Senate on April 26 but rejected in the House on May 3, 1975. *Congressional Quarterly* 33, no.18 (1975): 904.
4. *Congressional Quarterly* 33, no.18 (1975): 907. Accordingly, the bill was not cleared until May 16, while the authorization act, providing up to \$455 million, was not sent to the president until May 21, 1975. *Congressional Quarterly* 33, no.19 (1975): 1006-07; 33 no.21 (1975): 1075.
5. Henry A. Kissinger, *Ending the Vietnam War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 544.
6. Hubert Van Es, “Thirty Years as 300 Millimeters,” *New York Times*, April 29, 2005. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/29/opinion/29van_es.html.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media and U.S. Interests in Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2005), 8.
9. *Ibid.*, 6.
10. On the topic of the Vietnam War as the first televised war, see Michael Mandelbaum, “The Television War.” Some historians have seen the end of the Vietnam War as the “end of Manifest Destiny” or as marking the “limits of U.S. empire.” Daniel Bell, *The Winding Passage: Essays and Sociological Journeys, 1960-1980* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Books, 1980), 255. That is, as the result of anti-war movements, the end of the war should be marked as a victory for people’s power. Yet the U.S. did not withdraw from Asia altogether even though the Ford Administration could not and did not re-engage in Vietnam in 1975. The Cold War continued and the U.S. sustained its position in Asia regardless of its loss in the Vietnam War.
11. In order to understand the ways in which U.S. evacuation emerged in this historical trajectory, it is important to contextualize how the U.S. has narrated its own history of involvement in Asia as one of liberation. Lisa Yoneyama, “Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 1 (2003): 58-59.
12. Espiritu clearly analyzes how the bodies of refugees became a site for U.S. society to see the rescue, by turning refugees into successful examples of new Americans. Considering the lack of these liberated or rehabilitated bodies after the Vietnam War, the representations of some U.S. former allies as those who were “rescued” and “assimilated” into American society must be considered in part as a substitution of the American myth of “liberation and rehabilitation.” Yen Le Espiritu, “The ‘We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose’ Syndrome: U.S. Press Coverage of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the ‘Fall of Saigon,’” *American Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (2006): 329-52.

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13. For example, Jeremy Hein, *From Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia: A Refugee Experience in the United States* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Darrel Montero, *Vietnamese Americans: Patterns of Resettlement and Socioeconomic Adaptation in the United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979); Gail Paradise Kelly, *From Vietnam to America: A Chronicle of the Vietnamese Immigration to the United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977).
14. Wendy Brown "The Most We Can Hope For . . . : Human Right and the Politics of Fatalism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no.2-3 (Spring 2004): 453. Her broader argument in *The States of Injury* is that a politics of recognizing wounds and caring for those with such wounds is endemic to the conduct of liberal statecraft.
15. Yen Le Espiritu, "Towards a Critical Refugee Study," *Journal of Vietnamese Studies* 1, no. 1-2 (2006): 410-33.
16. *Ibid.*, 410.
17. "The popular and official discourse on Vietnam and its people during the Vietnam War established images—of inferiority, immorality, and unassimilability—that 'traveled' with Vietnamese to the United States and prescribed their racialization here." Yen Le Espiritu, "Towards a Critical Refugee Study," 424.
18. Historian Gabriel Kolko emphasizes the symbolic value of the aid for the Ford Administration: "Aid was not a matter of preventing defeat or saving scarce resources but rather a symbolic defense of U.S. commitments and credibility." Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 535. CIA director Colby claimed that the effect of U.S. aid was huge. He stated, "A prompt and large scale infusion would tend to restore confidence. The converse is obviously also true." Meeting minutes, April 9, 1975. National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
19. The original purpose of the administration—to use the airlift as a cry for help to justify a cry for war—was not successful, as the war did not continue. This was because AID had been dealing with internal "refugees" and orphans in Vietnam and had supported the U.S. war efforts. Louis A. Wiesner, *Victims and Survivors: Displaced Persons and Other War Victims in Viet-Nam, 1954-1975* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 327.
20. *Ibid.*, 328.
21. There was a public statement to critique the operation as "immoral." For instance, see <http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/archive/SIBSVOUS.htm>.
22. For example, the movie *Operation Babylift: The Last Children of Vietnam* (2009) did not question the legality of airlifting children without any proper immigration procedures. A movie like this overshadows the murkiness of the operation and re-narrates the operation as a rescue.
23. Sara O'Meara and Yvonne Feddersen, *Silence Broken: Moving From a Loss of Innocent to a World of Love and Healing* (San Diego: Jodere Group, 2003), 12-13. It changed the name to Childhelp USA and now Childhelp.
24. O'Meara and Feddersen, *Silence Broken*, 21.
25. *Ibid.*, 23-24. Also, Congressman James C. Corman (D-CA) greatly supported Childhelp USA, to set up the work in Vietnam, as well as Operation Babylift.
26. Cynthia Enloe reminds us that militaries rely on women. Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarization of Women's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), xii.

27. This is because according to Japanese immigration law, until 1985 children had to be born to legally married parents (at least the father had to be Japanese) to claim citizenship. Since 2008, children who are fathered by a Japanese man without the marriage of the parents can finally gain citizenship once they have been legally acknowledged by their paternity. <http://www.moj.go.jp/MINJI/minji163.html>.
28. Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racism and the US Occupation in Japan* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1999), 183.
29. *Ibid.*, 184.
30. The Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1982 (PL-97-359) started U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Form-360 to provide special immigration status. However the status is only provided to Amerasians who were born after December 31, 1950 and before October 11, 1982. <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-360.pdf>.
31. Sue-Je Lee Gage, "The Amerasian Problem: Blood, Duty and Race," *International Relations* 21, no.1(2007): 86-102.
32. The processes that produced them expose a history of U.S. colonialism, imperialism and militarism because the cases of Amerasian children always presume them to be products of American soldiers and Asian women.
33. In March 2004, Congressman Jim Moran, Virginia Democrat, with Congressman Lane Evans, Illinois Democrat, introduced legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives providing full citizenship for Amerasians who immigrated under the Amerasian Act of 1982 or the Homecoming Act of 1988. They claimed that in their home country Amerasians would face discrimination and segregation because of their heritage. Press release from the office of Representative Jim Moran, United States Congress, Eighth District of Virginia, March 31, 2004, available at: <http://www.moran.house.gov/issues2.cfm?id=8530>.
34. Arnold Isaacs, *Without Honor: Defeat in Vietnam and Cambodia* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983), 397.
35. The group of people who engaged in Operation Babylift evaluated the operation as a success because it created sympathy not only for the children but also for stricken Vietnam. Louis Wisner, *Victims and Survivors*, 328.
36. "Ford Lend Personal Touch to Orphans," *Milwaukee Journal*, April 5, 1975. "Orphans Met with Shouts of Joy," *Spartanburg Post*, April 7, 1975.
37. A U.S. consular of Can Tho, Wolfgang Lehman, claimed that they were using the baby-lift for Vietnamese evacuation. Larry Engelmann, *Tears before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of South Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 38.
38. Laura Briggs, "Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial Adoption," *Gender and History* 15, no.2 (2003): 182.
39. Denise Ferreira da Silva, "A Tale of Two Cities," *Amerasia Journal* 31, no.2 (2005): 122.
40. Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval: An Insider's Account of Saigon's Indecent End* (New York: Random House, 1977), 327-28.
41. Washington Special Action Group Meeting, April 2, 1975, "Meeting Minutes-Washington Special Actions Group, April 1975 (1)" US National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 24, Gerald R. Ford Library.
42. Memorandum of Conversation, April 14, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.

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43. Robert J. McMahon, *The Limits of Empire: The United States and Southeast Asia since World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 45.
44. Memorandum of Conversation (Cabinet Meeting), April 16, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
45. Memoranda of Conversation, April 16, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
46. Memoranda of Conversation, April 25, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council Meeting Files, Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
47. Meeting minutes, April 9, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council Meeting Files, Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library.
48. Hal M. Friedman, *Creating an American Lake: United States Imperialism and Strategic Security in the Pacific Basin, 1945-1947* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001).
49. Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft, April 16, 1975, "Washington Special Actions Group Meeting 4/17/75 Evacuation (1)" US National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 19, Gerald R. Ford Library.
50. Memorandum of Conversation, April 8, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. He stated: "I have spent a lot of time on this, now and even earlier, going back to 1952. I think our policy, going back to Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, was the right policy. We did not always implement it well, and we may have made many mistakes. But it was the right policy. . . . But to go to Congress and ask for nothing, that is dubious. It is our best hope, if we can get it." Memorandum of Conversation, April 9, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
54. Since the Truman and Eisenhower administrations deemed Southeast Asia as important and made U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia logical to save America's credibility, the president did believe that U.S. involvement was right. Robert McMahon, *The Limits of Empire*, 40.
55. Ford addressed the importance of U.S. forces for the humanitarian operation before the joint session of Congress reporting on U.S. foreign policy. Gerald R. Ford, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress Reporting on United States Foreign Policy. April 10, 1975," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, 459.
56. Memorandum of Conversation, April 15, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
57. Memorandum of Conversation, April 14, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid.
60. Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft, April 16, 1975, "Washington Special Actions Group Meeting 4/17/75 Evacuation (1)" US National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 19, Gerald R. Ford Library.
61. Memorandum of Conversation, April 14, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
62. Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in*

- Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 10.
63. Wendy Brown, "Human Rights as the Politics of Fatalism," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2-3 (Spring 2004): 460.
 64. In this way, the refugee figure has been a productive site for constructing a heteronormative nation. Mimi Thi Nguyen eloquently argues the relation between the refugee figure and refuge. Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
 65. Laura Briggs, "Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial Adoption," *Gender and History* 15, no.2 (2003): 180.
 66. On May 6, 1975, President Ford stated: "All in all I consider it a very successful operation under the most difficult circumstances, and I think we owe our military forces a sincere vote of thanks for their courage and dedication. . . . Looking at this large number of refugees, I have no doubt that we can handle these numbers. I want you to know that it just burns me up that these great humanitarians all want to turn their backs on these refugees. We didn't do this to the Cubans and to the Hungarians, and damn it, I don't want to see us turn our backs on the Vietnamese." Memorandum of Conversation, May 6, 8:10-9:20 am, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library. Julia Taft, who was the head of interagency task force for resettlement of Indochinese refugees in 1975, recalled the justification: "[B]lack in '75, one of the justifications that Ford gave was related to communism. He said these people are all fleeing communism, which was the same criteria that had been used for the Cubans, the Hungarians, other refugee groups that had been processed in the past." National Public Radio, All Things Considered script, January 14, 2007. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6855407>.
 67. Of course there are stories revealing the failure of the withdrawal. For instance, see Larry Berman, *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger and Betrayal in Vietnam* (New York: Touch Stone, 2001).
 68. This is why there are a lot of tragic stories about a Vietnamese woman and an American man: *Heaven and Earth* (1993), *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), *Three Seasons* (1999), *The Quiet American* (2002) and the musical *Miss Saigon*. These cultural productions of tragic (love) stories reveal the impossibility of rescue to heal the wounds of the Vietnam War. Films that take place in the "Third World" often require the female lead to stand in for the nation.
 69. This is not only for Vietnamese but also for Cambodians and the Hmong; the movies *The Killing Fields* (1984) and *Gran Torino* (2008) depict white male protagonists as saviors.
 70. Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers in the Indochina Exodus, 1975-1982* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 25.
 71. Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 5.
 72. It first played in London in 1989. Celine Parreñas Shimizu, "The Bind of Representation: Performing and Consuming Hypersexuality in 'Miss Saigon'," *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 2 (May 2005): 253.
 73. When Kim finds out that her husband was already married to an American woman, Ellen, she insists that they take her child Tam with them to the U.S. because he has more chances with them than with her. Ellen declines the offer saying she and her husband want to have their own baby. *Miss Saigon, Room 317*. Since Kim figures out that if she dies Tam will be able to go to the U.S., Kim commits suicide. *Miss Saigon, Final*.

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74. Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval*, 453-54.
75. Frank Snepp, *Irreparable Harm: A Firsthand Account of How One Agent Took on the CIA in an Epic Battle over Free Speech* (New York: Random House, 1999), xx.
76. Evan Thomas, "The Last Days of Saigon," *Newsweek*, April 30, 2000.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.
79. Christian G. Appy, *Vietnam: The Definitive Oral History Told From All Sides* (2003; London: Ebury Press, 2006), 503.
80. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, trans. John Reddick (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 4.
81. At the end of the war, from April to May 1975, the media did not report on the "rescue" aspect of evacuation but rather illustrated the government's struggle in accepting refugees and the wary reception by the public. For example, the *New York Times* described how the U.S. was struggling to resettle South Vietnamese in late April. "U.S. Struggling to Resettle Refugees," *New York Times*, April 24, 1975. The *New York Times* also announced that there was "wide hostility" towards "Vietnamese refugees." "Wide Hostility Found to Vietnamese Influx; Hostility Found across the Country as the First South Vietnamese Exiles Arrive," *New York Times*, May 2, 1975. *Time* described Americans' attitude towards the Vietnamese as "a cool and wary reception." *Time Magazine*, May 12, 1975, 24.
82. The *New York Times* reported that President Ford asked the "nation to open its doors to the refugees." "Ford Asks Nation to Open Doors to the Refugees," *New York Times*, May 7, 1975.
83. Nonetheless, there was an article claiming that the U.S. did not have any choice but to accept the refugees, since accepting refugees was a U.S. tradition. "We have No Choice, Our Tradition," *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1975.
84. "The Newest Americans," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 1975.
85. This is why the U.S. government implemented a dispersal policy to resettle Vietnamese refugees in 1975-76. Linda Trinh Vo, "The Vietnamese American Experience: From Dispersion to the Development of Post-refugee Communities," in *Asian American Studies: A Reader*, eds. Jean Yu-wen Shen Wu and Min Song (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 292-94.
86. He writes, "The Vietnamese American community has been shaped by complicated, sometimes contradictory self-serving and humanitarian foreign policy objectives, which create and reflect a close and controversial relationship used strategically to control the size, location, and livelihood of the Vietnamese community, sometimes creating discernible tensions." Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian American through Immigration Policy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 138.