

This recognition, a true rite of passage for her, gives her immense satisfaction, the kind a woman would get from a father raised in a society that openly fosters the double standard.

In the last section, "Nuestra Política," which I translate as "Our Political Agenda," there is a strong affirmation of both the ethno/linguistic element and being an American. Even though they might seem apparent contradictions, there are millions of individuals for whom that is their daily reality. Whether they live in Miami, El Paso or Portland, Oregon, is not relevant. The fact that they are bilingual, bicultural, and sometimes binational, is. The term "Hispanic" just seems too bland and general to reflect this state of mind; after all its origin was bureaucratic. That is why we come across more charged identity-words such as *Latina*, *Chicana*, and *Mestiza* (daughter of mixed parentage). This group demands to express itself in Spanglish, a language they claim is their true trademark. Likewise, their sense of political borders is more fluid. Thus, Gloria Anzaldúa in "Linguistic Terrorism" (taken from her classic *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, 1987) demands to be allowed to live in Spanglish, her true native tongue. "*Nosotros los Chicanos* straddle the borderlands. On one side of us, we are constantly exposed to the Spanish of the Mexicans, on the other side we hear the Anglos' incessant clamoring so that we forget our language. Among ourselves we don't say *nosotros los americanos, o nosotros los españoles, o nosotros los hispanos*. We say *nosotros los mexicanos* (by *mexicanos* we do not mean citizens of Mexico; we do not mean a national identity, but a racial one). We distinguish between *mexicanos del otro lado* and *mexicanos de este lado*. Deep in our hearts we believe that being Mexican has nothing to do with which country one lives in. Being Mexican is a state of soul—not one of mind, not one of citizenship. Neither eagle nor serpent, but both. And like the ocean, neither animal respects borders" (254).

Undoubtedly, this book belongs in every library with an interest in Latinas/os, feminist studies, Hispanic studies and anthropology. Highly recommended.

Renny Christopher

*The Vietnam War/The American War: Images and Representations in Euro-American and Vietnamese Exile Narratives*

Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996. Pp. 341. \$19.95

Reviewed by Philip D. Beidler

Renny Christopher has written an important book on images and representations of the Vietnamese in Vietnam war and post-Vietnam war narratives by Euro-Americans and by Vietnamese exiles. Further, the realm of inquiry into which she advances our knowledge must now strike us as so crucial

that one wonders how anyone could have overlooked it for so long. On this account, one might add, it is a shame that the long, garbled, and misleading title of the book gets things off to such a bad start. For Christopher's discursive premise could not be more clear: that what most Americans, in their old habit of cultural metonymy, call "Vietnam" or the "experience of Vietnam" (as I did myself in a book more than fifteen years ago) ought to be called at the very least "the American war in Vietnam." Proof positive of that, she continues, anticipating the second half of her argument, is before our eyes in the fact that the Vietnamese themselves have always known it as "The American War."

To do this, Christopher marks out her critical position among what might be called a new generation of writers on the war, often benefiting—despite some opening passages where too many "paradigms" get "valorized" and/or "transgressed" and so forth—from a quarter-century of new conversations about critical theory. At the same time, she does so, as have contemporaries such as Susan Jeffords and Andrew Martin, in a spirit of constructive revision on previous study. Further, the readings of individual texts which comprise the bulk of the work, at once wise and adventurously eclectic in the groupings and categories devised, are clear, brisk, and smart. And, most importantly, in framing the new, revisionary argument from which her readings benefit, she is absolutely right. The chief deficiency of the vast preponderance of American criticism, at least, on the writings of the Vietnamese war, is that it addresses an enterprise trapped solipsistically in its own atmospherics of national myth. As if the Vietnamese—whether friend or, as it turns out, ultimately victorious foe—almost weren't really there as far as the American *agon* was concerned. This is not to say that certain second-wave critics have not productively worked out *just this idea* in an American purview. As a figure of self-acknowledged delimitation, such is exactly the point, for instance, in Milton J. Bates's *The Wars We Took to Vietnam: Cultural Conflict and Storytelling* (1996), which might be recommended as a kind of companion text to Christopher's on the contemporary scene.

And what Bates means by that notion of "the wars we took to Vietnam"—the wars, for instance, of frontier, gender, class, and race—again becomes an immensely productive subject in Christopher's book as filtered through a long central section on Euro-American depictions of the Vietnamese. Texts covered include predictable popular and literary classics—everything from Robin Moore's *The Green Berets* (1965) and Lederer and Burdick's *The Ugly American* (1958) to Philip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* (1977) and Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* (1978). At the same time, she also addresses lesser known texts by such writers as the poets John Balaban and Yusef Komunyakaa and the novelists Susan Fromberg Schaffer, Robert Olen Butler, Wayne Karlin, and others, who actively seek a bicultural perspective. (A measure of the currency of Christopher's thinking may be that Butler's 1992 short story collection, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain*, in which he attempts narration from the perspectives of immigrant Vietnamese, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.) What

Christopher also brings that is new and important into the arena of inquiry, however, is the contextualizing power of two prefatory discussions. The first is on Vietnamese exile narratives—themselves an important new body of work. It includes such fairly well known texts as Nguyen Ngoc Ngan's *The Will of Heaven* (1982) and Le Le Hayslip's *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places* (1989) but also introduces numerous others that ought to be known to a general readership. The second, further contextualizing the first, dwells on a preceding tradition of works about US wars in Asia and the representations of Asians. As a result, in two radically different ways, we thus have charted out for us the domain of the bicultural other in which Euro-American texts, both known and unfamiliar, might profitably be read with new eyes.

To this degree, the work's conclusion, concerning texts on the subject of "going back"—itself a new area of literary endeavor—may claim a certain propriety. On the other hand, as to current textual producers—mainly US war veterans, civilian participants, and returning Vietnamese exiles—an analysis of motive in the narrative of return as it relates to new developments of cultural consciousness may for the present at least fall short of Christopher's claims—that the "phenomenon" itself "may be *cach mang*," revolution, literally "a change of mandate" (297). I think we must reserve judgment on that. At the same time, I hope that it will be the subject of Christopher's further writing. I, for one, will eagerly look forward to what she has to say; and when she makes her further inquiry, as I hope she will, I will surely, as here, learn deeply from it.

Lou Tafler

*Fair New World*

Vancouver: Backlash Books, 1994. Pp. 236. \$19.99

Reviewed by William Walker

Therry Grosspherdaughter has peed standing up. In Feminania, one of the principal nations of the world in the year 2084, this means he has committed gendercrime, for women can't pee that way, and like almost all cases of gendercrime in Feminania, this one has been detected by the Gequapo (Gender Equality Police). Since he knows he can only plead guilty or guilty with explanatory feelings, he knows he will suffer an act of political fairness (punishment), but he is still hoping this fairness won't leave him "gonadotropically challenged"—the fate of many perpetrators of gendercrime. Sandi Scuttlebut, on the other hand, is suing the computer software company, FemiSoft, for she claims that during a virtual reality date with a virtual man she had on a FemiSoft program, she was virtually raped. Since it is clear to her that "virtually no!" means virtually no, she claims to be the victim of a gendercrime, and, as all citizens of Feminania, but especially the Radical Femininnies, know: "where there's a victim, there's a gendercrime" (47). Given how things work in