

in twentieth-century America classes may have to consider providing supplementary material for the last two decades.

Messiah College

William Vance Trollinger, Jr.

Larry Cable. *Unholy Grail: The US and the Wars in Vietnam, 1965-8.* London and New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. ix, 292. Cloth, \$35.00.

Walter Capps, ed. *The Vietnam Reader.* New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. ix, 318. \$15.95.

Larry Cable may be the most knowledgeable scholar on the Vietnam War; he is certainly the most colorful. Dressed as a cross between a Hell's Angel and a hippie, with his hair down below his waist, he mesmerizes audiences in his frequent lectures at places such as the Air Force Command and Staff College and the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School. Beside his encyclopedic command of the documents and his erudition, his war record captivates even those at first taken aback by his appearance. As enlisted marine, junior officer, and CIA operative, Cable spent 64 months in counterinsurgency warfare in Indochina, mostly along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. He lived a large portion of the war on the ground, and his scarred body shows it.

After Vietnam, Cable devoted his career to understanding the war he fought. His first book, from his Ph.D. dissertation, *Conflict of Myths: The Development of American Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Vietnam War* (1986), argued the thesis that American policymakers "had not read the lessons of history" on counterinsurgency and "interventionary" warfare that could have spared them the tragedies of Vietnam. In *Unholy Grail*, Cable escalates the indictment: Military leaders not only did not understand but did not want to understand the nature of a limited war in support of policy. In his words, "their reports showed a jejune and puerile comprehension of the global policy matrix of which the Vietnam war represented only one portion. Invariably, the Chiefs demonstrated a complete willingness to sacrifice the policy matrix and the domestic consensus in order to win a military victory in Vietnam. They were eager to redefine Pyrrhic victory." His pithy assessment continues, "If intellectual and moral courage had been as prevalent in the corridors of power and chain of command as physical courage was in the bush of the South and the sky of the North, failed concepts and theories could have been recognized as such and their consequences mitigated in a timely fashion." The study is an insightful and meticulously detailed critique of the three disparate wars—which America miscondacted for so many years in Vietnam.

Every teacher who deals with military strategy and conduct of the war should give serious attention to *Unholy Grail*. Along with Andrew Krepinevich's *The Army and Vietnam* (1986) and Mark Clodfelter's *The Limits of Airpower* (1989), it is essential reading and an invaluable base for lecture material. However, the treatise's specific focus, challenging vocabulary, and sophisticated analysis of the policy process limit its appeal to serious advanced students. The book is not for the casual or uninformed reader. Cable has recently completed the manuscript of a shorter, more general survey directed to the student audience. When this volume is available in late 1993 or early 1994, it should be an excellent text for many courses.

The Vietnam Reader is directed toward a separate audience and has a quite different purpose. Though not an expert on Vietnam, Walter Capps, professor of religious studies at University of California at Santa Barbara, presides over probably the most famous Vietnam course in the country. His course gained national attention in the mid 1980s with its enrollments in the thousands and a CBS "Sixty Minutes" segment.

The course and the anthology attempt to present the wide impact of the war on individual lives and on the nation, to rise beyond questions of policy or military strategy to address moral and theological inquiry. Capps's orientation is clear: The Vietnam War is unfinished, unresolved, and unhealed in the psyche and soul of this nation. Closure and reconstructive healing await understanding, reconciliation, and harmony. The collection provides a broad and fair-minded range of experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of meaning arranged somewhat artificially under four sub-headings: Warriors Testimony; Lessons from the War; Diversities of Experience; and Symbolic Expressions, Ritual Healing.

Although the 36 inclusions are brief and most are significantly truncated from the original, the selections are well-chosen, readable, and pertinent to the volume's theme. The voices range from General William Westmoreland to an interview with General Vo Nguyen Giap; from well-known essays such as William Broyles's "Why Men Love War," James Fallows's "What Did You Do in the Class War, Daddy?," or David Fromkin and James Chace's "What Are the Lessons of Vietnam," to obscure pieces in alumni magazines, religious journals, *Mother Jones*, and the *Utne Reader*, even from Capps's own class. Three interesting essays treat black, Chicano, and American Indian veterans' experiences. The editor's introductory forward sets the tone, but he then allows the excerpts to speak for themselves without editorial remarks.

Although several other very fine anthologies are available for the classroom teacher, including recent mass-circulation readers by Andrew J. Rotter, Jeffrey R. Kimball, George Donelson Moss, Grace Sevy, and Robert J. MacMahon, Capps's is one of the better ones, especially for those who want to stress personal impact, diversity of experiences, and metaphysical import. I commend it highly.

Larry Cable and Walter Capps are dissimilar men—in experience, lifestyle, manner, philosophy, and politics. But they share a common bond in their passionate commitment to the deeper understanding of the rending experience of a war that remains understood superficially and imperfectly. Both invoke the names on the Wall, and all those, Vietnamese and American, who still suffer, as imperative to continue pursuit of the grail of meaning and resolution. In disparate ways, both these books do just that.

Converse College

Joe P. Dunn

***Re-Thinking History* by Keith Jenkins. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. Pp. 77. Cloth, \$10.95.**

Just as Keith Jenkins insists that history is determined by "the politics of truth," so is his attempt to provide an introductory text for the student seeking answers to "What is history" and "What is the nature of history?" This brief volume, polemic in expression and deconstructionist in intent, requires close, even repeated reading. Jenkins is a lecturer in history at the West Sussex Institute of Higher Education and would necessarily be very familiar with the "New History" curriculum that has dominated the public schools of the United Kingdom in the last fifteen years. Jenkins's attack upon Carr, Elton, Marwick, and Collingwood subsumes his criticism of the "evidence-based" curriculum of the "New History" program. In the end, Jenkins has managed to cast serious doubt upon the existence of "truth" in history and, concomitantly, the validity of the social studies curriculum of the U.K.

Jenkins is, as he freely admits, a product of the post-modern world and promotes the deconstruction of history both in content and practice. Perceiving history as a dynamic discipline in which every generation and interest group creates its own history, Jenkins sees history as