

created within that mindset, that lead to his eventual ideological transformation.⁷ The novel has three narrative frameworks. The first is an enclosing narrative which begins and ends the novel, taking place in 1974 with Ehrhart as an engine-room seaman on an oil tanker, playing cards with Roger, a shipmate. This narrative, in which Roger serves as a questioner, audience, and foil for Ehrhart, functions as an envelope for the other two narrative lines of the novel. This elder Ehrhart is the final product of the process of the novel; he is the ideologically-transformed radical narrator who presents Ehrhart-the-author's point of view. The next narrative level is that of Ehrhart as the 1969 college freshman, just returned from a tour of duty in Vietnam. Here we are presented with Ehrhart trying to readjust to civilian life, and trying to fit in with the quiet campus community of Swarthmore College. However, Ehrhart's attempt at integration is futile, as the third narrative line, the story of his experience in Vietnam, continually punches through his consciousness, fracturing both Ehrhart's subjectivity and the narrative line of

member of the American hegemony, albeit a slightly cynical one. The struggle between what he sees, and what his military and cu

Oh god almighty, what have I done? Here it was at last: Pam's eyes were the same eyes I'd seen in a thousand faces in a hundred villages, staring up at me in mute hatred as I towered over her, my whole body cocked, ready to explode again. And this time there was no rifle, no uniform, no Sergeant Taggart barking orders, no mines, no snipers, no grenade ready to explode, no juggernaut momentum of a vast military bureaucracy out of control and bogged down in human

accept silence. In the conclusion of his essay “Stealing Hubcaps,” Ehrhart explained why he felt the need to write: “I do believe that we have to keep trying because if our voices fall silent, the only voices left will be those of people like Oliver North. I have to keep trying because it’s the only way I can live with my self, knowing what I know.”²⁶

While Ehrhart has received most critical renown for his poetry, his prose deserves as much attention to help understand his project of bearing witness and recording experience which resists integration into dominant or hegemonic cultural myths about the Vietnam War. His three memoirs, *Vietnam-Perkasie*, *Passing Time*, and *Busted* chronicle both the transformation of his perspective, and the experience which prompted it.

Notes

¹ Bill Short and Willa Seidenberg, “A Matter of Conscience: Resistance Within the U.S. Military During the Vietnam War” (*Vietnam Generation* 2.1, 1998), 82.

² Short and Seidenberg, “A Matter of Conscience,” 83.

³ For information on soldier radicalisation, see

¹² Ehrhart. *Passing Time*, 228.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 162.

²² *Ibid.*, 166.

²³ *Ibid.*, 172.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 179-181.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.

²⁶ Ehrhart, "Stealing Hubcaps," 109.