

MYTH

By Elizabeth Weber

Tonight I am creating
the killer of my brother.
I am reading a *Smithsonian* article
on Vietnam and looking at a picture
of a freelance photographer
on the shore of Hoan Kien Lake in Hanoi.
Five blurred men surround him
and only he smiles.
He could be my brother's age,
thirty-nine. He could have been
in Chu Lai on February 12, 1968.
He could have waited with a gun in a tree
near a rice paddy and watched
a line of stupid Americans
walk into view on a dike.
He could have aimed his gun at the one
who carried the radio
and seen not a man like himself
with fears and loves, but
a radio, a gun, an obstacle and
thought *radio, kill, fire!*
All day this man has worked by the lake
and stopped tourists who look
at the dun-colored water
or lean against the trees
to rest and look at what they've bought.
He's made 1,000 dong
and watched fifty people
feed bored ducks.
He walks home through gritty streets,
the day cool with a slight drizzle.
Hawkers call to him
to buy American TVs,
radios—dreams
he can't afford. He walks
and feels the earth go automatic
under his feet.
Home, a daughter comes to greet
him after her bath.
Her skin wet on his skin
and clothes as she
climbs into his lap
and he holds her.

He has won this moment
with his daughter in his home
where no bullets stir the leaves
in the ginkgo trees outside.
He has survived.
I want to ask him how it was that day.
I want his daughter to listen
to him explain how the bullets entered
my brother's body
and exploded, and how what we hold inside
is torn irrevocably apart.
I want this, and I don't want it.
I want his daughter in his lap.
I want the trees outside still.
I want him to pick up a book
about the creation of the world.
I want her to fall asleep
to the sound of his voice,
telling how near a high plateau
over the Muang Ten River,
the Moon became the wife
of the Morning Star, and they gave birth
to the human race
whose dead children become stars
and how glorious it was
on the first day on this earth
in the beginning.