



American Exceptionalism in the Age of Globalization: The Specter of Vietnam

William V. Spanos

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Connects the American exceptionalist ethos to the violence in Vietnam and the Middle East.

In *American Exceptionalism in the Age of Globalization*, William V. Spanos explores three writers—Graham Greene, Philip Caputo, and Tim O’Brien—whose work devastatingly critiques the U.S. intervention in Vietnam and exposes the brutality of the Vietnam War. Utilizing poststructuralist theory, particularly that of Heidegger, Althusser, Foucault, and Said, Spanos argues that the Vietnam War disclosed the dark underside of the American exceptionalist ethos and, in so doing, speaks directly to America’s war on terror in the aftermath of 9/11. To support this argument, Spanos undertakes close readings of Greene’s *The Quiet American*, Caputo’s *A Rumor of War*, and O’Brien’s *Going After Cacciato*, all of which bear witness to the self-destruction of American exceptionalism. Spanos retrieves the spectral witness that has been suppressed since the war, but that now, in the wake of the quagmire in Iraq, has returned to haunt America’s post-9/11 “project for the new American century.”

William V. Spanos is Distinguished Professor of English at Binghamton University, State University of New York. He is the author of many books, including *America’s Shadow: An Anatomy of Empire and Heidegger and Criticism: Retrieving the Cultural Politics of Destruction*.

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