

## Introduction

AT THE MILLENNIUM it seemed for a moment as if Imperialism were dead, replaced by something subtler, something verbal: Hegemony, or cultural dominance achieved with at least the partial consent of the dominated. This notion, spawned by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and globalized by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their millennial book *Empire*, seemed to imagine Hollywood as the Pentagon of the future (hence Bill Clinton's cozy ties with the entertainment industry), and summoned new energies of popular resistance.

Where has this gone now, with American military command centers opening for business in the Persian Gulf, and US troops patrolling the Afghan moonscapes once lit only by the flares of the Northern Alliance? Is it back to crude force without persuasion, weaponry without words?

No. All domination from Athens to Foggy Bottom has come with a second desert storm of language, ideological cluster-bombs strewn among burning lives and settlements. In this issue Jon Thompson and Pamela Smiley reconsider two of the great verbal resistances to the idea-war in Vietnam, Michael Herr's *Dispatches* and Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*. And Barbara Baer and Marianne Boruch remap the cultural geographies of the Cold War, another interminable mix of bullets and bulletins.

Boruch in particular reminds us that these vistas are not purely horrible, that in the motion of thought comes not only the push and pull of Hegemony, but also art, as it refuses to play by the rules of unfreedom. In the rest of our space are exemplars of this: the American Poet Laureate, a Pulitzer Prize winner, a Nobel prize winner, a MacArthur Fellow, a Juniper Prize winner, and lots of unanointed winners unfazed by the mind-denying firestorms that seem imminent in the dark of this darkest winter.

*David Lenson, for the editors*