



Writing Vietnam, Writing Life: Caputo, Heinemann, O'Brien, Butler

By Tobey C. Herzog

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Phillip Caputo, Larry Heinemann, Tim O'Brien, and Robert Olen Butler: four young midwestern Americans coming of age during the 1960s who faced a difficult personal decision—whether or not to fight in Vietnam. Each chose to participate. After coming home, these four veterans became prizewinning authors telling the war stories and life stories of soldiers and civilians. The four extended conversations included in *Writing Vietnam, Writing Life* feature revealing personal stories alongside candid assessments of each author's distinct roles as son, soldier, writer, and teacher of creative writing.

As Tobey Herzog's thoughtful interviews reveal, these soldier-authors have diverse upbringings, values, interests, writing careers, life experiences, and literary voices. They hold wide-ranging views on, among other things, fatherhood, war, the military, religion, the creative process, the current state of the world, and the nature of both physical and moral courage. For each author, the conversation and richly annotated chronology provide an overview of the writer's life, the intersection of memory and imagination in his writing, and the path of his literary career. Together, these four life stories also offer mini-tableaux of the fascinating and troubling time of 1960s and 1970s America. Above all, the conversations reveal that each author is linked forever to the Vietnam War, the country of Vietnam, and its people.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Tobey Herzog puts these veteran-authors through a rigorous boot camp of reflection on their craft and personal experience. They show what they’re made of—indeed, what writing, war, and life are made of. Take your most enlightening encounter with a writer-in-residence, multiply it by four, and you’ve got this book.”—Milton J. Bates, author, *The Wars We Took to Vietnam: Cultural Conflict and Storytelling*

“As honest as you can get about war and the literary imagination, these conversations describe how four American authors have come to understand themselves—first as midwestern sons, then as soldiers, and then as writers. The book is for those of us who served in Vietnam and for those who want to learn firsthand about the fury and passion of those times.”—Anthony Bukoski, author, *Time between Trains*

About the Author

Tobey Herzog, a Vietnam veteran, is a professor of English at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana. He is the author of *Vietnam War Stories: Innocence Lost* and *Tim O'Brien*.

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