

with one week in February of 1968 bringing news of five hundred thirty-four American deaths. Romero's images of rotting corpses on a violent landscape covered with entrails and viscera, and a band of survivors battling it out with faceless hordes and deeply divided among themselves, perfectly suited the American mood.

In the years ahead, Tom Savini would do an even better job of bringing these rotted corpses to life. Savini had been friends with George Romero during their youth in Pittsburgh and would likely have worked with him on *Night of the Living Dead* had he not been called up to serve in the army the same year. Savini carried a makeup kit with him through basic training and even used collodion, a liquid plastic, to make up a drill sergeant who wanted to frighten his next platoon. Sent to Vietnam as a combat photographer, Savini brought home a blend of trauma and creativity that led him to become the greatest makeup effects artist since Lon Chaney Sr.¹⁶

Savini's first film assignment drew directly on his personal horrors. *Deathdream* (1974) told the story of a Vietnam casualty who returned home to his horrified family as a rotting zombie-vampire. Working with Romero on *Dawn of the Dead*, Savini brought the war home again with images of a zombie head exploding from a gunshot and arms and legs torn apart. These scenes of gore replicated what he had seen in the rice paddies. In his 1983 book *Bizarro*, which explains special effects techniques (with a preface by George Romero and introduction by Stephen King), Savini remembers a moment in Vietnam when he "nearly stepped on a human arm, one end of it jagged and torn, its fist clenched and grabbing the ground." When not photographing horror, Savini visited friends in the hospital who had been catastrophically wounded by land mines. In *Bizarro*, he suggests that he trained his mind to see these things as special effects in an effort to deal with the trauma.¹⁷

The Vietnam War did not create the zombie genre or make way for the vampire. However, like the Civil War, Vietnam produced a very graphic iconography of death and bodily dissolution that has remained a permanent part of American culture. Horror images for the next forty years, in a very literal sense, owed their blood and gore to the conflict. Unlike the Second World War, in which images of veterans seldom included evidence of wounds, the corpses and the physically traumatized human body became a focus of America's memory of Vietnam. The zombie and the vampire (joined by the serial killer) feasted off these images, and Americans turned to these monsters that resonated with the national horror.¹⁸

moreland's desired rate
The infamous My Lai
of the everyday horrors
the incident with the
of U.S. soldiers entered
habitants (mostly women
turned murderous gunfire
death toll at between four
some of them infants in
result of American policy.
candy out of the back
children to run for it and pos-
Vietnamese peasant woman
grabbed her son's hat and
under the vehicle's tire,
individual soldiers are dwarfed
the Vietnamese people by the
channel visited on the Vietnam-
selves endured, both in terms
To the fifty-eight thousand
five thousand physically dis-
tens of thousands more with
psychological maladies. In at
Mai Lan Gustafsson, a veteran
spirit of a Viet Cong fighter
only found peace when he
the fighter's mother.¹⁴
the first truly televised war,
created a massive photographic
Americans. Vietnam came to be
images of troops returning in
of the failure of American pol-
entered the public record and
screen as Americans became
graphic death, gore, and body
the Tet Offensive inaugurated