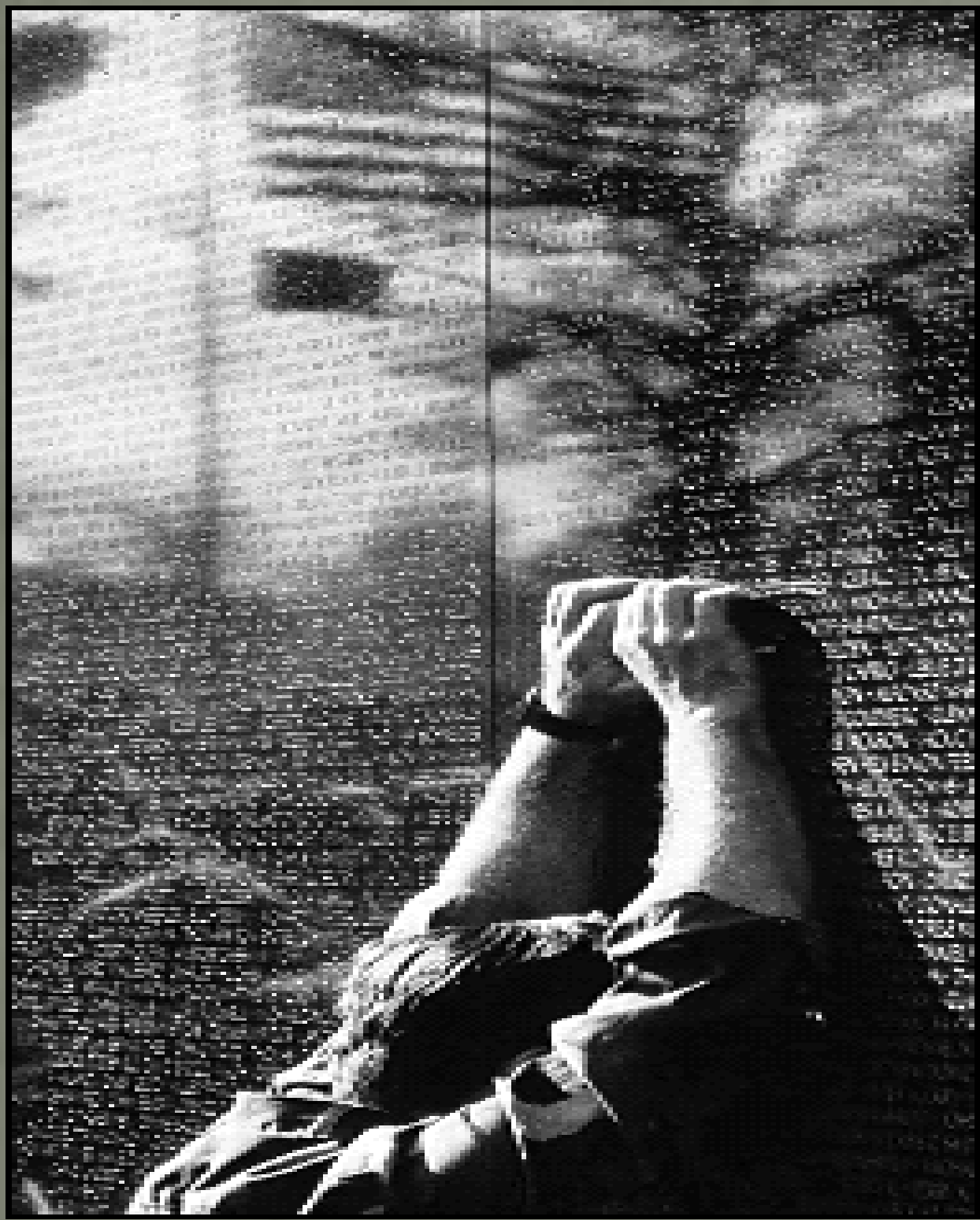


Every Smile Contains a Dagger

By Tiffany Craig School of Theatre Advisor: Rick Jones



Mark points to his photograph of two grapefruits, an orange, a broken egg, with a grenade in the center... From far away it looks like an ordinary Still Life.
- Emily Mann's *Still Life*

Although PTSD has plagued veterans from war since Achilles' time, the Vietnam war saw a strong spike in the number of soldiers who will forever suffer from Combat PTSD. This tragedy soon became a social phenomenon that was expressed in all artistic forms, even theatre. My study focused on the personal and social effects of Combat PTSD. I compared the fictional plays from Vietnam veteran, David Rabe (*Sticks and Bones*), and civilian Emily Mann (*Still Life*). Although fictitious, the soldiers in both plays reveal the pain of this illness, and the playwrights illustrate the bitter effect the Vietnam war not only had on the men, but their families as well. Indicating how severely Combat PTSD can deteriorate lives, Mann's play was written ten years after the end of the war but yet the soldier still could not overcome what he faced in Vietnam. Comparing the fictive to reality, I discovered several links between the two plays to Dr. Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam*. In fact, had our society known then what Shay reveals in his book now, these men tortured by the war might have received help rather than be ignored and sent out to live on the streets or worse. For the men who are strong enough to attempt recovery, I believe the quote at the top precisely illustrates how Vietnam will haunt them forever.

