

VINCE GOTERA

The Vietnam Vet Plays Gyruss

—after William Winfield's "December"

Diamond bullets streak through diamond stars
like rounds screaming in from some other war.

I have metaled my name into molten ingots
and shrapneled them into Charlie.

I have tied my hands,
given them over to brass.

I have harbored my faith and my lust
in a metal bird and hovered it in the sky.

I have strafed onetwothreefourfive farmersjustlikethat,
whole families of sampans on rivers of blood.

I have seen my face in spiraling CRT light.
I have traced my fire in the night, pulsing.

Streams of phosphor. Blue steel. Shadows
shifting in the green treeline of the perimeter.

I have fed my heart on Dear John letters,
on Jody and my girl, on deros to shoot him.

Enemies gyre now from the center, black hole
birthing alien spaceships, photon torpedoes.

I lay down fire, frozen into this orbit, round
and round, piling up scores like a body count.

These crystal bits that pass for sky, the dark
slot lit again and again by serrated edge of silver.

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Gulf War Haiku

a hummingbird slips
 ruby-neon helmet deep
in fuschia blossoms . . .

 its hollow beak, black
 as stealth-bomber wings, traces
red calligraphy

 on dawn's lavender
parchment . . . feathers, like fireworks,
 bleed sparks in dark air . . .

 all day, hummingbirds
 glow like ghostly fighter planes
behind my eyelids

Vince Gotera teaches at the University of Northern Iowa. His books include a critical study, *Radical Visions: Poetry by Vietnam Veterans*, and a book of poems, *Dragonfly*. Recently, *Into the Fire: Asian American Prose* featured "Returning Fire," a short story about a Filipino American grunt on R & R in the Philippines during the Vietnam War.