

# New Poetry by Peter Mladinic: “Fist”



AIR THICKER THAN / *image by Amalie  
Flynn*

In Okinawa I made a fist  
and my fingers stuck together  
that stop over night  
my one stop before Danang,  
between two worlds,  
the flag burning, tear-gas  
U.S. and the Vietnam rat-tat-tat  
automatic fire, the LBJ  
How many kids ... and the sandbag  
fortified bunkers. Didn't  
see anyone die, only the dead.  
In Okinawa, planes  
on the runway, the air thicker  
than Danang's.  
The smell of napalm,  
how real for some.  
I stood holding a metal tray  
in a chow line, slept  
in a top bunk, spit-shined boots  
so their tips were mirrors.