

AMY BAGWELL

epitaph for uneasy inheritance

*He was sent to Vietnam to do a job, and on March 16, 1968,
he thought he was doing his job.*

—John Philp, WSB-TV News, Atlanta, March 20, 1971

the only soldier convicted of murder for the My Lai Massacre
returned from Vietnam to my hometown where he was never
despised the only soldier sentenced for the My Lai Massacre
served ninety minutes for each of his twenty-two confirmed dead
victims the only soldier imprisoned for the My Lai Massacre
thanks to Nixon left life and hard labor for three years' house
arrest the last soldier to *apologize* for the My Lai Massacre
became a strip mall jeweler and when my mom stopped

biting her nails bloody sold my dad a diamond and sapphire ring
for her prize (her only such item) and none of this they explained
but who could blame them *Rusty* isn't a killer *Rusty* is your buddy
with a past you want to help him outlive because it's your past
too and looking back means we either look at or look through
at least five hundred ghosts, one-third of them children