

**The Children Of Saigon**

Always at night I found them  
climbing the piles of junk burning  
on the base. Around a flat track

I ran for miles, tight muscles  
jogging past bleachers  
where French soldiers

in parades for years  
passed out in the sun. Children  
climbing those bulldozed heaps

for food, for clothes, for trash  
piled up to blaze. I saw them  
crawling the last flare of the sun

spangled on garbage, the dump  
blazing in the sweat and blink  
of my eyes, children and old men

ragged and golden, clawing  
through flames long after sundown,  
no matter how many nights

I went without supper,  
how many leftovers I begged  
and carried in darkness

out past the tarmac and bleachers,  
passing it all to children  
who grabbed it and backed away.

— *Walter McDonald*