

CHAPTER III
SYNOPSIS OF “FORREST GUMP”
AND
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

3.1. SYNOPSIS

Forrest Gump is a mentally retarded man who was born at Mobile, Alabama. His mother is a widow who runs a boarding house to support their life. She gives full intention toward her son's life. She wants him to get the same education like those of normal children. Unfortunately, Gump is not qualified to study at the elementary school. His teacher suggests that Gump is put in a mental institution; the place where he spends six years. He gets out from the mental institution since a football coach asks him to play for the local highschool team. He never knows how to play football until one day; Gump hits one of his annoying friends. He also explores his talents on running fast. Being the fastest runner, he gets the All State Football award. The Alabama University takes him and drafts him to become a football star. Forrest Gump spends his days in this university for one semester only since he has a low intelligence.

During all those years, Gump is addicted to Jenny Curran, his child-hood friend. His love for Jenny is pure and honest, but Jenny always runs away from him. She is involved in folk music, drugs, protests, and bad relations. Forrest Gump's love has finally become her only true love even though she is married to someone else.

The Alabama University has introduced him to Bubba, his best friend whom he honors a promise to build a shrimp business. He meets Bubba again when he is obliged to fight in the Vietnam War. Bubba is killed by the Vietnamese troops, but his death encourages Gump to fulfil their dream. Forrest Gump is awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor as a Vietnam-war hero by President Lyndon Johnson; therefore, he must promote the army in front of university students from various universities. The army hopes they can gain more people to participate in the United States Army. On the contrary, Forrest joins the protest against the Vietnam War since he wants to please Jenny.

He goes to China as the United States representative on the Ping-Pong tournament. He learned to play Ping-Pong when he was in Danang Hospital. Gump not only plays ping-pong; in fact, he saves Chairman Mao from drowning. His action is considered stupid by his supervisor, Mr. Wilkins. However, his stupidity has given an opportunity for re-opening the United States international relations with China. The people of China are very grateful to Gump so that they welcome him as a hero.

Danang Hospital also gave him a chance to meet his best friend, Dan from whom Forrest learned more about philosophy of life. Forrest has his own value that is "always doing the right thing". Dan helped him to understand more about happenings that can not be comprehended by him, such as the war. He understands that he should find his place in this world and fight for his life. Dan strengthened Gump's optimism. On the other hand, in the future Dan becomes a pessimist after he has lost all his properties. Since then, Gump has taken care of Dan's prosperity.

Even though Gump is an idiot, he has many surprising talents in physics and mathematics. Scientists categorize him as an idiot savant. Because of his ability, NASA appoints him to become their crew in the outer space mission. Unfortunately, NASA makes mistake by sending a wild orangutan in the spaceship that causes the ship to blow apart. It falls on the remote Pacific Island. Forrest struggles to live among the pigmies and other barbarian tribes for two years until the army saves him.

When he has met President Richard Nixon, he decides to look for his love, Jenny, accompanied by Dan. Gump and Jenny manage to live together for several months until Jenny leaves him again. Jenny wants him to open the shrimp business as soon as possible, while Gump is still enjoying his profession as a wrestler. Gump is very sad when Jenny leaves him. He thinks he has done something stupid in his life. Therefore, he goes to Bayou La Batre to start his business with the help of Bubba's father and Sue, the orang utan. He gets his money to run the business from the chess championship in New York where he gets the chance to meet Mr. Tribble. This man becomes his right hand to run his giant company in the future.

Few years later, Gump is known as a business tycoon and is appointed to be a senator candidate. He fails because of the investigation of "New York Times" about his past life that is very unusual for most people. Gump is not satisfied with his achievement since he can not find Jenny. Moreover, he is bored with all the life style of famous and wealthy people. Gump decides to leave his company and gives it under the supervisor of his mother, Mrs. Gump and Mr. Tribble. He also gives his company's shares for his friends and the local hospital. He goes to Savannah, where he finds

Jenny and his child, Little Forrest. He lets go of them since Jenny is married to someone else. Together with Dan, they enjoy the life as ordinary people in New Orleans. He still keeps his optimism by saying “life is like a box of chocolates, you will never know what your gonna get”.

3.2. BIOGRAPHY

The review on Winston Groom’s biography is taken from Philip Beidler’s book entitled *Rewriting America: Vietnam Authors In their Generations*. Winston Groom is the son of a Mobile lawyer. He was expected to follow in his father’s footsteps and take up the law. After editing both the literary and humor magazines while a student at the University of Alabama, Groom rejected the law in favor of the word. Before he could get established in this new profession, however, Groom found himself in Vietnam. He spent thirteen months in 1966-1967 as a second lieutenant in the infantry. This wrenching experience would provide material for two of Groom’s later works.

Upon his return to United States, Groom landed a job at the Washington Star covering police and the courts. Considering he had no formal journalism experiences, he was lucky to obtain the position, and had the opportunity to learn on the job. On the advice of friends, Groom finally decided to take the plunge into novel writing. He quit his job, moved to New York, and began to pen his first time.

His Vietnam-war novel, *Better Time Than These*, a personal memoir tracing the experiences of a rifle company in Vietnam, won great acclaim. He followed this with another prize-winning novel, *As Summer Die*, set in Mobile. He then co-authored "Conversation With The Enemy" with Duncan Spencer. This collection of interviews with former Vietnamese soldiers was rewarded a Pulitzer.

Winston Groom is known as a Vietnam-war author. Most of his books are based on the reality of Vietnam. His well-known novel *Better Time Than These* was his own experience as a secondary lieutenant in Vietnam. He writes the story of a young lieutenant in Vietnam. The young officer has been well trained in the "by the book" ways of the army, but he soon learns that in Vietnam you throw the book away. Groom introduces his readers to a variety of characters that are all real and familiar to every Vietnam vet. *Better Time Than These* recounts all the passions of a nation, the personal tragedies, its families and the brutal realities that are part of every war.

Philip Beidler, through his book *Rewriting America: Vietnam Authors In Their Generations*, conveys that Winston Groom is exemplary of the new and imaginatively inventive sense making, often resulting in new levels of insight and acceptance, achieved in second and third novel. Groom reflects the reality without conveying the Ethnocentrism, immaturity and apolitical reliance. His work is not merely propaganda. He could re-integrate his previously marginalized experience back into the mainstream of American literary and cultural tradition.

He then continues to write *As Summer Die* based on his knowledge as a student of law faculty. It is a story of a small town Louisiana lawyer named Willie Croft. The novel takes time when oil is discovered on the land held by black share croppers Bienville's ascendancy. Willie discovered the power of courage, love and the right kind of dream.

His famous character, Forrest Gump was written in Point Clear, Alabama. Gump represents the typical of real Southerner who is well known of their hospitality and friendliness. Southerners are also known for their relatively relaxed and unhurried life. Groom performs Gump as a mentally retarded man with a superior heart – an innocent in the corrupt world. Forrest Gump is a unique character ; a satire towards cynicism and hatred in the world. Through this novel, Groom criticizes the concept of dreams that are planted in the Americans for so many years.

Groom adores Southern culture very much. Through the characters of Forrest Gump, he maintains the norm of friendliness and kindness of the Southern people. The good heart that is owned by Forrest Gump supports it. We need to be optimistic in facing our life no matter what happen. If we can not reach our dream, we are still able to do what we are pleased. The lost of dream is not the end of the world. The world is fun and nice depends on how we look at it. The lost of the dreams is not the lost of our soul.

Groom returned to Alabama at 1986 and created his famous character Forrest Gump. The novel had respectable sales, but was not a best seller and Groom moved on to other project. Forrest resurrected in the surprise film hit of 1994. The re-release

of the novel sold 1-7 million copies. Groom wrote a sequel, *Gump&Co* and published several books of Gumpism and Gump recipies. Paramount has optioned Gump & Co.

Groom's most recent book is *Shrouds of Glory* a non-fiction account of the last great campaign of the civil war. The book focuses on the efforts of General John Bell Hood and the details the confederacy's final desperate struggle to turn the tide of civil war. Groom now lives in Point clear, on the Eastern Shore of Mobile bay, where he and his wife, Anne Clinton has built a house.

CHAPTER IV

"FORREST GUMP" AS SEEN THONGH GENETIC STRUCTURALISM

