Reflections, Receptions, Reactions: Rethinking Vietnam War

Wajiha Raza Rizvi*

Film Museum Society, Lahore, Pakistan

*Corresponding author (Email: wajiharaza@yahoo.com)

Abstract - Reflections, Receptions, and Reactions: Rethinking Vietnam War offers a survey of Vietnam War scholarship, documentary films, and other data about the antiwar movements. The study examines both balance and bias in scholarship and films portraying the War to give an insight into the War. It evaluates the quality of the available research papers and documentary films on different aspects of the War from war ideology to trauma in veterans, war time music, casualties and protests in the US, and war effects like beggary and prostitution in Vietnam, providing an overall synthesis and evaluation of the scholarship. The survey identifies the focus of each research paper and locates similarities and dissimilarities in the works of different authors, evaluating the quality of the individual and collective scholarship. It allows the reader to hear different voices, understand individual focuses, and evaluate the ideology of war and enemy in general and Vietnam in particular. The survey of the Vietnam War scholarship challenges the ideology of wars in the name of peace as it invariably discusses death, desolation, and destruction and the trauma of the War.

Keywords - Vietnam War Scholarship and Films, Rethinking Vietnam War, American GIs and Veterans from Vietnam, American Innocence Versus Ideology of War, Media Bias in War Narratives

Traditionally, all war seductions and epics celebrating the Triumph of the Will and victories has triggered scholarship that challenges human cost of drama of war, which is largely ignored in favor of larger than life political objectives of the governments. In the case of Vietnam, several critics have significantly pointed to production of both the incoherent and coherent but biased narrative structures in media that baffle the public with incremental war imagery in juxtaposition to official ideological, incremental war policy. This imagery leaves its viewers immersed in a paradox of objective realism. Though film and television are not the only media to reflect on war, they are the dominant two. Other minor media include antiwar documentaries of the antiwar movements, novels, memoirs, songs, soldier songs, cultural artifacts, and antiwar publications in the US forces. Scholarly research by academics on all of these media as well as the studies of war specialists working in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have significant value to rethinking the Vietnam experience and Vietnam studies which are initiating and keeping pace within academia and some private institutions.

Scholars, through their distinctive debates on Vietnam, tend to analyze visual materials for diverse reasons, from the study of an inherent ideological agenda of media politics and policies to the study of war imagery and meanings in productions. Peter C. Rollins insists that the American celluloid and television wars endorse the official perspective of war (429). Peter Braestrup argues that the Johnson Administration puzzled the media, the critics, and the citizens of the United States with its “ambiguous and incremental war policy” and “confusing, often misleading rhetoric” (29). Loren Baritz says that at the core of American intervention in Vietnam was the historical trust that American was “militarily invincible” (13). On the issue of war reflections in media and public perceptions, Ron Steinman points to professional claim of producers and channels for “a sense of dignity and good editorial judgment” (59) in transmitting “hard-hitting action” irrespective of their political bent; and, its lack symbolizes weakness (34). Rolf Giesen offers a critical stance to this position and claims that director internalizes innocence to the production of propaganda which corresponds to the lifelong illusion of the director (33).

From Steinman to Baritz, Braestrup, and Rollins, the debates give an overview of the infrastructure behind the multidimensional scholarship of an antiwar movement that originated in 1965 and still continues in the form of Vietnam studies. The critics in the quoted examples are condemning the illusion, promotion and perception of victory themes in the Vietnam War productions, as these themes tend to compromise humanity and human losses to war in pursuit of official larger than life political gains. Most of the criticism on war reflections and their subsequent public perceptions of media content reflect a smooth development of antiwar scholarship and a consensus on the production of condemnable propagandistic war images.

On the subject of documentation and scholarship on wars in films, Jean-Jacques Malo and Tony Williams say, “The motion pictures dealing explicitly with the Vietnam War are seldom encountered from the mid-1960s to 1977” (xiv).
About the later films, the critics complain that the Vietnam films tend to reconstruct pseudorealistic pictures of war, that oscillate between optimistic innocence and experiential reality. These extravaganzas share elements borrowed from horror, adventure and thriller genres and desire to impart a horrific experience loaded with the madness of war, sensuousness, and a moral dilemma. Another common thread in critical works points to ideologically formative structures and film narratives that involve viewers in the drama of war outside of their spatial and temporal realities and fail in imparting a real experience of war’s past, present, and future (Rollins, 473). The study and value of films for rethinking and reevaluating the Vietnam experience cannot be denied. Malo and Williams have enlisted production materials of substantial significance in their anthology, Vietnam War Films. They argue that several different generic approaches that emerged from the mid-1960s to 1977 “treat the war in indirect and allegorical ways” (xiv), for example, biker movies (The Born Losers, Angels from Hell, The Losers, Chrome and Hot Leather), Western (The Professionals), science fiction (Dark Star), and student shorts by Oliver Stone (Last Year in Vietnam, 1967) and Robert Zemeckis.

Malo and Williams argue that virtually all Hollywood films “ignore the perspective of the Vietnamese people themselves” (xiv). An interesting entry, Patrouille de Choc (1957), the first French film featured in Vietnam, cites censorship problems on an original intended true account by Bernard-Aubert. The French Ministry of Defense objected to the original pessimistic ending: a total annihilation by the enemy ―at the time of colonial war in Algeria; a cinematic defeat in Indochina was not tolerable” (xviii). Joe (1970) represents Nixon’s silent majority backlash against permissiveness and antiwar activism (222). Off Limits (1988) portrays the most striking, breathtakingly misogynist, racist interpretations of the Vietnam War (304). It is obvious from these examples that the entries touch upon some basic political issues, hegemonic oppression, ideological war, difference of opinion, war/antiwar binaries, which historically have been of interest to scholars and researchers from various disciplines. Though Malo and Williams do not include many chapters of scholarly criticism on political issues of war (with the exception of two), the value of this anthology cannot be denied.

The anthology, Vietnam War Films, is important for rethinking the Vietnam movement and Vietnam studies as it includes multidimensional war images, diverse war themes, and multicultural war perspectives of nations from around the world. Touched with the spirit of multiculturalism, the anthology hints at political issues and enlists “over 600 features, made-for-TV, pilot and short movies, 1932-1992, from the United States, Vietnam, France, Belgium, Australia, Hong Kong, South Africa, Great Britain and other countries” (Malo and Williams). The authors have pragmatically classified films in the following categories: Western representations of Southeast Asia before the war, images of war during the French or the American involvement in the whole region of Southeast Asia, depictions of veterans of the French or American wars in Southeast Asia, references to the Indochina and Vietnam wars in films about the French and American home front, images of the antiwar movements in France or the U.S., images of the refugees displaced because of the conflicts in the Southeast, films gazing at Southeast Asia after the French and American presence.

As the first point of reference to locating Vietnam productions, the 1994 edition of the Vietnam War Films provides plenty of information about the origin, date of print and duration of Vietnam films. In addition, it includes information on key concepts and figures: director, producer, screenplay, photography, music, themes, keywords, synopsis and historical/political reference. The anthology is an authoritative document, a kind of extended bibliography, and the best available single source for referring to the international war scene in the form of pictures. This anthology is the most suitable one point reference guide on war visual material for scholars and researchers interested in initiating a study of war imagery or Vietnam studies. It is especially useful for rethinking Vietnam movement initiated by academia, NGOs and other private sector institutions. A second edition or a supplement of entries from 1992 to present would be more than valuable.

In addition to Malo and Williams, two detailed accounts, Inside Television’s First War: A Saigon Journal by Ron Steinman, the American chief of Vietnam news bureau from 1966 to the end of the war, and Big Story by Peter Baestrup (33), Saigon Bureau Chief for the Washington Post during Tet, provide a deep insight in the inside story of television news and current affairs as well as print media efforts in Vietnam. Steinman’s politically sensitive accounts also carry an air of managerial criticism, while Braestrup’s accounts are strictly evaluative. Steinman’s accounts only deal with NBC’s treatment of the Vietnam War, while Baestrup assesses the quality of Vietnam War news of all sorts from television to radio to print media. Big Story brings to light unlimited examples of erroneous and hasty reporting from Vietnam and criticizes the attitude of news teams and the level of professionalism. This study is quite valuable for streamlining and analyzing the level of responsibility behind agenda-building and agenda-setting when broadcasting war news and imagery.

A comparative study of Steinman and Braestrup’s accounts of television war points to certain basic flaws in Steinman’s scholarship. Due to the pressure of competition with CBS and other channels for hard hitting action, the journalists often flocked to the same places, sometimes ignoring coverage of other important fights, or events. In light of the information documented in Big Story, Steinman’s accounts of the Vietnam War (closing) events appear incomplete and at times erroneous. Though Steinman attempts to contribute to the debate on the antiwar movement by giving insight into a whole decade of war events involving GIs starting 1966 to the ceasefire, his journalistic vision is clouded due to consumer focused agenda of his employers.
His accounts are useful for studying rethinking of Vietnam as they splice condemnable media motives behind war imagery with a real insight of war. In doing so, he joins the antiwar-movement of scholars. In spite of its weaknesses, Steinman’s volume can be used as a first source to look at a war through the eyes of a journalist who was participating in a media war in a consumer oriented society.

Braestrup, on the other hand, criticizes print, radio, and television media for erroneous treatment of war materials, for example, specific fighting events from Saigon, Hue, and Khe Sanh were turned into the whole war (218-19). The Big Story tracks news media reporting errors and obscure rhetoric in Vietnam. In addition, it also tracks the weakness in news content as media heavily relied on briefers and informers from the military and police. This book is an authoritative document on news bureaucracies, media pressures, chronic rebuke of media management, and paradoxes of Vietnam “disaster stories.” The book gives an insight into heavily duplicative patterns of war news among media monopolies: they all fight for the same news (Braestrup, 11) and despite antiwar editorial stances in papers and antiwar documentaries on television do not “conform to a ‘line’” (Braestrup, 45). The book also supplies information on the “bullpen” editors, key figures, and diplomatic “peace feelers” in relation to war negotiations. Though there is a possibility that the book does not provide a comprehensive list of events in Vietnam, the evaluative entries are far too many. In the absence of a directory or bibliography of Vietnam War (media) events, this case study maintains the status of a first authoritative reference point for readers and researchers looking for nearly complete entries of most any war events with the names of the places in Vietnam. This book is a useful guide for the study of ‘mass communication of complex war events’ in Vietnam. The lessons implicit in this case study need to be freely debated, digested, and evaluated by the Vietnam studies scholars, researchers, and groups to transcend into society.

Baritz says that the Americans believed they were “militarily invincible” because the virtuous American soldiers had beaten Indians, French, British (twice), Mexicans, Spaniards, German (twice), Italians, Japanese, Koreans, and Chinese (13). Baritz’s criticism lies at the heart of the Vietnam War crisis; it gives an explanation of a Presidential decision by Lyndon B. Johnson, who in the torrent of American muscle, intensified the Vietnam War by increasing the number of the American soldiers from 16,000 in 1963 to 550,000 in early 1968 (in the defense of the freedom of South Vietnam under the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, 1964). The scholarship is an analytical response to an initial U.S. inhibition from attacking or forming a firm policy for the region at the time of the demise of French colony in 1954 (due to the possibility of a larger conflict with the Chinese and the Russians), to full blown commitment, and to ceasefire. In rethinking Vietnam studies, Baritz’s essay can be used for analyzing and evaluating the root cause of strategic decisions.

Rollins’ argument on the U.S. war ideologies and Braestrup’s chapter on Johnson’s baffling and incremental war policy and misleading rhetoric (29) that confused the media, the critics, and the people are important as they focus on circumstances that triggered countrywide demonstrations and protests against Johnson’s administration despite his comprising liberal legislation of the civil rights laws and welfare programs. Some data of the antiwar movement (Wellesley), which is very useful for the study of Vietnam War, war perceptions, reactions, rethinking and reevaluating Vietnam, is available in documentary form. America, Love it or Leave it (1990) envisages Americans deserting the country during the war; Chicago (1968) brings together anti-war activists, authors, politicians, and historians from the Democratic National Convention in Chicago; Different Sons (1991) documents Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal), a four day march by 100 Vietnam veterans from New Jersey to Valley Forge in Pennsylvania; a PBS series, Making Sense of the Sixties (1991), explores the 1960s antiwar movements through the eyes of veterans and citizens who were either confused by the war or were on the sidelines; Return of the Seacacus seven (1982) is a record of fears and memoirs of seven radical American children of the first decade of war, arrested in New Jersey in anticipation of participation prospects in a Vietnam War protest in Washington. The War at Home (1990) uses a microcosm of the events of the University of Wisconsin to comment on the war protest movement in the U.S. through seventies, and touches on foreign policy issues in a free society. The microcosms of the antiwar documentaries support the cause of written scholarship.

The significance of these microcosms and macrocosms lies in defining the public perspective of a war, which was mapping the disruption of normal life within the United States. Rollins, Steinman, Alneng, and Springer’s works are significant for magnifying the role of war imagery in influencing public perceptions and developing culturally specific identities and worldviews to the effect of contemporary life in the U.S. and Vietnam. Rollins and Springer explore the paradoxes of balanced, unbiased war imagery which can be applied to pressurizing rhetoric in films and news, current affairs programs and documentaries that bombard American people with new worries. Rollins thinks the news of the exceedingly high cost of war and an increasing number of casualties and deaths was the antithesis of the promises of American life (420). Rollins’ scholarship of the antiwar movement during Johnson’s tenure is grounded in public interest in foreign affairs and policies that affect their interests. This scholastic piece shall splice the antiwar documentary, The War at Home (1990), which uses a microcosm of the events of the University of Wisconsin to comment on the war protest movement in the U.S. through seventies, and touches on foreign policy issues in a free society. This combination becomes useful for rethinking and reevaluating Vietnam at all forums including academia.

Rollins, Baritz, and Braestrup’s works synthesize a collective meaning: Johnson was faced with a difficult home situation, loss of public faith, war realities, and a fear of being
regarded as the first president in the U.S. history to lose a war. The significance of Rollins discussion on the antiwar movement lies in the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam early in 1973; the Communists ignored the ceasefire and finally defeated the South Vietnam in 1975; the unified Vietnam was officially declared the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on July 2nd, 1976 under the Communists (the Vietnam War). When put together these works complete a chain of interconnected events of the U.S. policymaker war, which proved use to no cause. Together these essays give a complete picture of the U.S.-Vietnam War story.

Rollins is still fighting a war with the images of war through his essays like “Victory at Sea: The Cold War Epic.” A scarily convincing classic of the cold war era, Victory at Sea (1952) nearly netted all key awards including the Freedom Foundation’s George Washington Medal. This thematic and financial glory combines real raw naval footage of war experiences to reconstruct a global war that influences popular emotions by applauding the U.S. above the level of power politics. Obsessed with technology, even seven year after the war, it renders a pseudo-realistic picture of WWII. The epic creates the myths of the legendary American innocence and the doctrine of freedom while others are shown in pursuit of despotism like in other wartime propaganda. It encourages a psychology of self-righteous moralism: the cold war mentality to indoctrinate the leaders and the lead in Vietnam (Rollins, 477-78) in contrast to the alternative approaches of Strange Victory which reflects the national inability to overthrow the lethargies of war. One celebrates victory as the beginning of a new era, while the other looks at the human cost of victory in search of a deeper social meaning.

Rollins’ argument is very useful to understanding how idealistic visual interpretations of war reduce objectivity to subjectivity in human objects; how the protagonist and antagonist leitmotivs and their variants enhance the power of visual impact (02/22/2007) by raising human emotion to involve them in the drama of war (467). He lays down details of a process by which the viewer absorbs a pseudo-realistic picture of truth and gets relieved of any responsibility to identify with a truly realistic mental picture of war histories (Rollins, 473). This phenomenon of media bias in influencing emotions and opinions is explained in statistical figures by Russo in a much ignored 1971 essay “A Study of Bias in TV Coverage of the Vietnam War: 1969 and 1970.” Rollins’ strong reaction to triumphant treatment of victories and human losses in the cold war epic can be understood in relation to the figures of human losses in the longest conflict of U.S. history: approximately 3 to 4 million Vietnamese, about 2 million Lao and Cambodian, and 47,244 American (while 303,014 American soldiers were wounded).

Steinman says the war not only destroyed Vietnam, but also changed the character of nations and the life of every individual who became part of it (13). The people of representative nations in Vietnam survived in uncertainty and had a natural fear of the unknown. This distress is especially noted as a recurring theme in the works of the veterans whether scholars, journalists, authors, artists, or specialists. A vast majority of them “moved in a straight line, with purpose and resolve, problems would take care of themselves,” says Steinman (13). His essay, “A Changed City,” gives a picture of the alien environment, jungle anxieties, hostilities and uncertainties that the U.S. men and women faced in Vietnam. The purpose of the essay can be understood from atrocious depictions in Apocalypse Now (1979) that clearly emphasizes the theme of the jungle anxieties: the enemy being anywhere and everywhere without a clear front to the war. These essays and the film highlight the American justification of thoughtless attacks in residential areas. In Apocalypse Now, Captain Kilgore orders a napalm attack (“Bomb it to the Stone Age, son”) to make the beach safer for surfing and declares the napalm smells like victory in the morning. Rollins and Charlot’s essays highlight the irony in manipulative film processes: these blazing depictions, which aim at building morale and high spirits among the soldiers, cloud the judgment-ability of the public to understand realities and atrocities in war. John Charlot in his essay “Vietnamese Cinema: The Power of the Past” explains how hostilities lead to anger, the ultimate cause of atrocities behind a demoralizing war.

Rollins in “The Vietnam War: Perceptions Through Literature, Film, and Television” argues that the atrocious experiences of the unconventional Vietnam War were reflected in different narrative forms that dealt with difficulties of assigning a proper metaphor, creative structure and meaning to the unconventional war. The celluloid wars, television’s “first wars,” fictions, and memoirs of the innocent Vietnam veterans urge Americans to rethink the Vietnam experience. A number of controversial fiction and documentary films tap American themes as well as a disparity between American commitment and Vietnam realities. Vietnam representations in literature, film, and television help in reinforcing Washington’s perspective of war and America’s national image “as an international cop on the beat” (Rollins, 429). The contemporary perceptions of Vietnam by academia and the private sector respond to contemporary pressures; they need to be evaluated, integrated and transcended. Rollins’ essay voices the public and veterans’ disagreement with foreign policies and America’s role in the international war scene which continues even today. The essay emphasizes the need for an active viewer and condemns the construction of a passive viewer by the media. It is highly important as it rhetorically emphasizes that America needs responsible active viewers who can judge the real meaning of wars, to rethink and reevaluate the Vietnam experience.

Rollins in “Ideology and Film Rhetoric: Three documentaries of the New Deal Era (1936-1941),” explains the principle of the interrelationship of form and content, which demands scholarly awareness as it also applies to thematic and cinematic aesthetics of film, which are devices of film language. The rhetorical differences in documentaries
reflect the differences in the political or social persuasions of their filmmakers. The media solutions in these films do not clarify public perceptions of the core social issues; the discrepancies of its aural and visual narratives mirror the lack of “coherent, unbiased, objective” journalism. Rollins gives a map of the cinematic mise-en-scène that often signals a cliché: a moral dilemma pitted against the common desire for social reforms. He works out the structural implications of the intellectual montages. These films demand a passive trust in national governmental morality and legislative support for maintaining international peace while the rhetoric of the most important U.S. films paints a general picture of doom with some intellectual, emotional, and moral implications for audiences’ action. Rollins’ essay focuses on director’s role in shaping public opinions through a manipulative medium. It gives structural details of the cinematic process, rhetoric, mise-en-scène, and intellectual montages et cetera that function at the level of the subconscious and desire active viewers, yet passive respondents. Its relationship to the study of cinematic structures influencing public opinion in relation to rethinking Vietnam experience surmounts.

According to John Charlot, the Vietnam War imagery has special emotional significance for American minds (442). In his view both the Vietnamese and the Americans are striving for an objective view of the war and do not desire to be ruled by the spirit of anger or revenge. American Vietnam veterans in particular condemn both the form and the content of Vietnam War films and television programs (444). Charlot admires the cinema department of Vietnam for their objective acclaim of non-propagandistic film series Vietnam—Building and Defending Our Country that explores the humanistic impact of the war, culture, and history from the Vietnamese point of view (446). Similarly, Fairy Tale provides an escape from war implications through a romantic fantasy of a young girl about a young soldier at the war front while the Tenth Month explores the emotional tension of a soldier’s widow who indulges herself with a school teacher to write fake letters to her father-in-law from his son (Charlot, 451). The films, in their historical context, explore the significance and preciousness of usually unnoticed little moments of life and judge if they are “worthy of war, worthy of the suffering and sacrifice” (Charlot, 451). The prioritization of life over human cost to wars is noticed among the victims of war. This essay introduces the Vietnamese perspective to the emerging debate. It reinforces that the public in both the U.S. and Vietnam do not wish to be overcome by the anger of the defeat. In this manner its contents reflect public interest in foreign policy and voice for peace.

Varick A. Chittenden witnesses a parallel (to above) in the American case. Chittenden argues that the Vietnam veterans see the Vietnam very clearly today. It is hard for them to tell the stories, but they want the public to know that, “War sucks!” (412). Bad memories, difficult adjustments, frustrations, and pathos in veterans find outlet in various creative and literary forms. For example, Marine Veteran, Michael Cousino of Gouverneur, New York makes miniature dioramas to represent Vietnam experiences (Chittenden, 412). According to Chittenden, some of Cousino’s works epitomize propagandistic memories of the Vietcong in VC Recruitment through imprisoning the young village boys and girls, killing all of the old people, and leaving behind American artifacts to prove they did it (414). Chittenden introduces a new perspective to the debate on rethinking the Vietnam War. Today, the memory painters, folk artists, and the veterans, whether they are in shape, or disabled, value life with their “characteristic fatalism and a genuine determination to make the best of the situation” (Chittenden, 419-20). By reflecting on veterans’ works, she is creating a history of rethinking Vietnam experiences through their eyes: new values, concerns, and images and says, “[they] seem to appreciate the public acceptance of their art forms” (Chittenden, 423). Chittenden’s perspective on the emergence of newer beings from the deepest souls of the overt aggressive kinds reflects the beauty of an eternal love that survived in soldiers despite the realities of war.

Ironically, the thematic aggression of war spliced with thematic limber of artistic expression in the war field found its way to the radio. Everyone seems to condemn the role of motion pictures and television, but radio gets little attention as a source of transmitting aggressive themes, raising emotions, and influencing opinions. Lydia M. Fish discusses the contradiction between eternal love for life and the enemy’s hatred through the significance of ‘60s songs and soldiers’ own songs during the war times: USIS “sponsored tours of Vietnam by American folk groups” (Fish, 392), some of the soldiers’ music received official sponsorship, some soldier songs recorded on inexpensive portable tapes in the messes, were occasionally played on AFVN Radio (393). Fish argues: To most of us, the Vietnam War has a rock and roll soundtrack. Almost every novel, memoir, or oral history of the war by a veteran mentions the music that the author listened to in country. All of the songs of the ‘60s were part of life in the combat zone; troops listened to music in the bush and in the bunkers … But there were other songs in Vietnam too—the songs made by the American men and women, civilian and military, who served there for themselves (390).

Fish gives a new perspective to rethinking the Vietnam movement by pointing to human imbalance, parallelism in love and hate as both become the undercurrents of dominant official war ideology. The themes of soldiers’ published songs from the ‘80s celebrate war either in praise or violence, but they served as a strategy for survival in Vietnam: “We Flew in the Wolf Pack with Robins Old,” “The LT Who Never Returned,” “Chocolate-Covered Napalm,” and “We’re Going to Rape and Kill” (Fish, 391). Fish’s work explores the changing role of human traits as they become dominant or recessive. It supports the scholarship on anger of war, for example, Peter Marin, Russo, Braestrup, and Rollins stand in her camp. Whatever took over soldiers during the war, most of the narratives in veterans’ oral history, novels, memoirs, and criticism deploy rethinking and reevaluation themes and desperately desire to transcend themes in society. Three
decades down the road, we are witnessing a revision of American war history in Vietnam both by public and war veterans.

In “To Eat is to Live: 1985,” Steinman also recollects the meaning and appeal of band music, heavy on guitars and violins, Rolling Stones style rock and roll, the Beatles, bouncy bubblegum music, and folksongs in war time Saigon. But his version is an ironic reflection on the lives of the Vietnamese nightclub dancers “with surgically uplifted breasts and straightened noses to mimic what they assumed was the American look found in Playboy” (174). He even sees a paradoxical parallel between his war news experiences and gangster films. Steinman says in the 1960s and 1970s (Saigon), going to Maxime was like going to Studio 54 in New York (173). Maxime, the center for glitz, corruption, prostitution, and drugs, “looked like a set for a 1930s gangster movie, but in color ... Get-rich-quick Vietnamese and Chinese completed this scene of grotesque, pre-World War II Berlin transported to South East Asia” (174). The huge nightclub served as a playground for “Vietnamese soldiers fresh from wars … Carrying loaded weapons; they drank, ate, and played until drunk, high, or exhausted. Then they would try to leave without paying. They were soldiers and they felt they deserved a free night in town” (175). Steinman’s crew covered their small riots and shooting up scene for NBC which followed another story of “the Vietnamese military police beating a half dozen soldiers who were falling down drunk from too much brandy and beer.” But, they were too drunk to feel blows on their jungle ridden thin bodies (175). These images sound like an echo of Fish’s Vietnam songs. Paradoxically, these images also fit with the official perspective of war, a U.S. justification to take the matters of the corrupt and immoral South Vietnam in its own hands.

Steinman’s NBC hot stories point to a plethora of ironic turns in Vietnam War imagery on media that the scholars are debating. From the outset, their glossy media treatment reminds you of a belligerent soldier song “We’re Going to Rape and Kill” (Fish, 391). Steinman’s war time news imagery brings in a mixture of horror, adventure and thriller genres wrapped in the cover of good editorial judgment, which seems to be condemnable as scholars stand united on the issue. Victor Alneng’s essay, “What the Fuck Is a Vietnam?” on the ruined heritage that destined Vietnam to become a culture of commodity and consumption supports the scholarship, veterans’ pathos and antivar movements on rethinking Vietnam.

Steinman’s war imagery and the list of popular news themes magnify the paradox of objective realism in the media. NBC, New York management provided ‘plenteous equipment’ to Steinman (60) and demanded “hard-hitting action” irrespective of their political bent, and its lack was not tolerated (34). His argument throws light on competition in a consumer oriented marketplace under the surface of good editorial judgment. The sole interest of television channels lies in building audience through exciting depictions of war, “Chocolate-Covered Napalm” (soldier song), and anything that involved Americans from an antiwar march to a soldier’s funeral in a small American town. Steinman’ blazing and fragmenting depictions of the real life disruption stories of Vietnam mystified American judgment as critical opinion converges at this focal point (Rollins, Russo, Springer, and Malo and Williams).

Steinman’s essays “The Bureau” and “Routine and Then Some” discuss the purpose of their operations in Vietnam and support the antiwar scholarship on the role of the two-dimensional frame in imparting a fragmented sensory illusion of real war in a multidimensional space by layering it with throbbing action and emotion; total annihilation by enemy is intolerable by censorship (Malo and Williams xviii). The total antiwar scholarship seems to converge at this focal point. Steinman says this kind of reporting stalls communication of the real meaning of war— “craters and rubble, death and destruction, the fragmentation and disruption of life” (35).

Steinman’s list of popular news media imagery spread over 22 chapters in his book is unlimited. It covers limitless issues that are being challenged at multidisciplinary forums in academia and the private sector. This imagery takes readers back to Rollins’ debate on the drama of war (467) to rethink the Vietnam movement. While they were chronicling “a rare student demonstration,” a story within a story emerged. Steinman’s young boys were beaten by the Vietnam National Police, often called “white mice” because of their white shirt, gray trousers, and cowardly disposition” (59). The political stories of the Buddhist demonstration turned riot in Hue triggered the unstoppable fire among the North and South Vietnamese armies, the Americans, and the Viet Cong (Steinman, 60). This coverage on NBC followed many stories of the monks burning themselves in front of the Buddhist Institute (Steinman, 61), burnt and swollen skin cracked bodies (68), refugees running from town to town (64), futureless and family-less mournful kids who sold roasted peanuts or pick-pocketed (67), and young girls who had no pride in their heritage and lived out of prostitution (174). Several stories pointed to repression and dictatorial rule of war: the police raids following default of scheduled payoff from street vendors and black marketers (71). The unlimited nature of this list and its role in creating anarchy points to the paradox of war ideology. Russo’s statistics on media bias support the scholarship against the paradox of war ideology and objective and coherent reporting.

In “Tipsters and Informants,” Steinman uncovers another paradox: the morality and methods of news collection and distribution. The police, army, and media join hands in their own focused interest. Steinman’s informant at National Police Headquarters was on NBC’s payroll who delivered sugarcoated information wrapped in warnings to restrain them from the sites of planned activities (74). The briefing officers from “the Army, Marines, Air Force, and Navy” fixed them “on continuing battles” and the “battles that were” yet “to start” (76). American intelligence provided data (77) and arranged for their transportation “to the battlefront to cover...
the start of a sizeable action” (76). This was like shooting a report of a staged action without exclusive rights to shoot. NBC, like a conspirator, had the budget to reciprocate for money Vietnamese knowledge and expertise to exchange information and speculate the Vietnamese and U.S. activity of the past and the future (79-80). This essay makes a valuable contribution to the debates on operative official ideology behind war imagery. American muscle, false media prestige and competition for breaking news to its consumers to involve them, as Rollins says, passively in “the drama of war” (467).

Steinman also hints at unpopular news, that which was short of ‘hard-hitting action,’ for example, air force personnel in Vietnam building a dam in spare time; this story was covered by CBS (91-2). Such entries are valuable as they fit in scholarship on the drama of death by discussing a dilemma of editorial judgment, the media preference for flashier action to generate excitement through death (Rowe, and Wetta under omelli). Interestingly, Steinman’s spellbound cameramen discussed the art of “camera truth,” and the New Wave technologies of the French to improvise in the war field (92). The irony of the role of the art and technique can be understood through Giesen’s argument on a director’s illusion and Steinman’s argument on the love of profession, or ego libido of a more powerful self image that ruled the minds of the American reporters during the war (89). They were working under a strong desire to live and report. Steinman says, “We wanted to survive, to eat and drink as best we could in spite of the war (171). In terms of reporters’ treatment of war, they mandated and improvised individual stories of war (Steinman, 92). An in interesting incident that refers to the media’s desperation for hardcore action is magnified when Steinman’s team was faced with a hard time at the Pentagon announcement of the completion of troop buildup without warning: “the story, the adventure, the action, the experience, career, the future, [and] ego” took shape of their new worries (96). For all of these reasons the “Saigon City Desk” becomes a valuable chapter for highlighting competition and opportunity factors in war. This becomes part of the moral debate in antiterror scholarship. Steinman was running NBC’s largest foreign bureau in the world at the height of the Tet Offensive (248) and had become world famous.

The Vietnam War’s peak and closure paralleled the advent of satellite wars in the media. In a chapter, under a cynical title, “Happy New Year,” Steinman discusses a greater media war near the rise and closure of the Vietnam War. The news teams in Vietnam were as pressed with the sense of competition and speed for war correspondence from war fields as were producers for delivery from the NBC studios in New York. This competition became a measure of professional prestige between NBC and CBS. Steinman’s last stories of the Da Nang rocket attack for NBC via Tokyo satellite were received with pleasure because NBC did not lose to CBS in the satellite war (204). The Da Nang story became the war’s biggest story that preceded a chain of Communist attacks on Khe Sanh, the DMZ, the Central Highlands, the Tet, the American Embassy in Saigon and the American base at Tan Son Nhut (Steinman 205). To Steinman’s relief, under the spirit of competition and to provide the American public timely news, NBC started manning the communications center twenty-four hours a day around the time Tet started (Steinman, 212). Losses were stunning on both sides. Channels claim to have a prime mission: to provide the audience with what it needs to make an informed decision (Steinman, 248). On the other hand, Frank Russo feels that the ambivalent coverage of war caused the “public’s distaste for more aggressive and lengthy war activity” (Russo, 543). The results of aggressive war reporting on American channels and increasing number of American casualties caused incalculable political damage to President Johnson who withdrew from running for a second term.

Braestrup points to the erroneous and speculative reporting in Vietnam, for example, the Da Nang story. In this connection, the news of the orders to ‘use all the fire power at the citadel,’ once the Imperial Palace, and its massive devastation could not be verified (203). He says that the National Shrine massacre of Hue “was largely overlooked; news reports cited ‘Vietcong terrorism’ without any information as to its scope” (211). The devastation caused by dropping “500-pound napalm barrels” was near total: “crumbled walls, damp, decaying bodies, burned vehicles, and trees shattered by shells (205). Initial reports cited the loss of 45,340 lives out of a population of 140,000 and damage to 80% of the buildings while later figures were reduced to about 50% (203). Braestrup claims more civilians than soldiers died. He adds, “NBC’s aftermath story was to be rivaled only by Newsweek’s hyperbole: American officials in Hue admitted that more than three quarters of the people are now homeless” (208). Braestrup’s entries on media errors are valuable to understanding the paradox of media news. Not only do his entries provide information on erroneous reporting, they also highlight the details of hard-hitting-action events in terms of exciting images of war. Vietnam offers imagery of vicious fighting, execution tanks, machine guns, artillery, tear gas, crumbled wall, burnt buildings, burnt bodies, burnt vehicles, buried dead or alive, refugees, orphans, child labor, prostitutes, playboys, rapists, addicts, and mass graves. This devastation is overlooked by the media (Braestrup, 104). The exploration of this scholarship brings to light the media role in triggering passive behavior through bias.

Frank Russo explains American “bias” in portraying the Vietnam War in terms of monopolistic control of television. His data on television’s monopoly is in sourcing domestic and international news routes for “‘bias’ of television news coverage of the Vietnam War” (540) and is very useful to reception scholarship. He says Nielson ratings point to “35 million television sets [that] were tuned to evening news shows each night ... Elmo Roper & Associates polls in 1959, 1961, 1963, 1964, and 1967 also confirm television status as the primary [most believable] source of news” (540). Russo emphasizes the oligopolistic broadcast industry was exerting enormous power over the normative judgment of the masses during Vietnam and, hence, influencing opinions in support or opposition to President Nixon and his policy. Russo’s data on
anti-administration and pro-administration studies of “the Left, Progressive, and Right of the Yale Political Union,” based on newspaper reports of 1969-1970 prove “there was no bias against Nixon administration in Vietnam” (Russo, 542). The data also shows that liberals believed that fair “as opposed to balanced coverage” will make people anti-administration. Fred Friendly, a former president of CBS News said, “A country cannot commit to fight the war unless the country hated the enemy” (Russo, 543). Then, the ambivalent coverage of the war causes the “public’s distaste for more aggressive and lengthy war activity” (Russo, 543). Though scholars do not seem to turn to Russo’s 1971 paper for the study of paradoxes and manipulative war imagery, the document has its value, as he provides statistical data to prove media bias and monopoly. An important feature of Russo’s report is his statistical data of anti-and-pro-administration studies of television’s role in influencing perceptions, ideologies and opinions of viewers from Left, Right, and Center.


Victor Alneng discusses “the crucial role the American war plays in promoting Vietnam as a tourist destination” through a parallel between an “obligatory beer-bar or brothel scene” in mythical Vietnam “syndrome” movies and a 1999 the Backpacker’s bar in Ho Chi Minh City (462). According to Alneng, the ruined heritage destined Vietnam to developing other economic resources, tourism being a major resource under 1986 political reforms. Today modernity combines with consumption, “imagination and nostalgia that evoke wishes and desires” (464) among backpackers. Alneng studies “touristic tourist phantasms” to explore “the complexities of the worldview in the context of a technologically complex international scene … in its apt wider social context, international tourism is an ideologically saturated nexus where culturally specific identities and worldviews – through practices and narrations – are constantly being represented, consumed, reconffirmed, negotiated and modified” (464). The study of tourist phantasms, loaded with “spatially and temporally unlimited … agency, strategy, and movement” (465-66) strategies on part of backpackers, helps in exploring the complexities of war effects in contemporary Vietnam.

Andrew Martin in “Vietnam and Melodramatic Representation” says that John Wayne’s The Green Berets (1968) was the first propagandistic attempt of the American institutions of popular culture to come to term with the Vietnam War. This film, “a cliché ridden throwback’ to WWII” received negative reviews (54). He says while Rambo-style fantasies were pervading both American filmmaking and foreign policy, a subgenre of American prisoners in Vietnam emerged. Platoon (1986) was the first to convince Hollywood financiers that “Vietnam was good box office” (55). The Vietnam War is now essentially an American family melodrama, “with the familiar trope of sibling rivalry” (55); Hollywood sticks to formula “fantasies and stereotypes” to confine “the memory of an actual event” to melodrama as this was the only way for war to reenter the popular conscience via the mass media (55-7). Coming Home (1978) is the prime example of a melodrama that makes excessive use of music to retain this character (58). Martin’s research explores the cultural aspects of melodrama lacking the confidence of realism and forever remaining in search of something lost. He says the pathos and irony is the crucial trope of these melodramas as the war exists in repressed form in American culture and the veterans have internalized the defeat like a bad conscience (56-7). The narrative resolutions of Vietnam War melodramas are “hyperbolic display[s] of emotionality and patriotic sentiments” (66). This research, while still focusing on melodrama in war genre, supports the contemporary debate on influencing public opinions and emotions through films.
Michael Evans in “The Serpent’s Eye: The Cinema of 20th-Century Combat” discusses the war’s ideal nature for commercial cinema for its conviction to “all of humanity’s great themes—life, death, love, faith, hope, duty, defeat, and victory” (87). He defines American combat cinema as a subgenre of war that concentrates on organized conflict among uniformed infantry of men on a battlefield. Their struggles mediated by the power of machines embrace escapist fantasies. The paradoxes of war are “impersonal and meticulous in planning, but personal and chaotic in execution” (88). The reconstruction of “the seething hell” of war is contingent on its era of history, but can the film reenact a soldier’s real experience? (88). Whether biographical or character driven, the combat films tend to create horror and majesty of war in many styles from auteur to documentary-style realism for giving an insight in infantryman’s warfare in international settings. Evans argues that Steven Spielberg, Terrence Malick, and John Irvin have turned to “good” war–World War II subjects and claims that American cinema has historically relied on using “the camera like [a] serpent’s eye-charming to destroy-through the romantic propaganda of military glory.” He finds American combat films “shallow,” “bloodthirsty,” and “unreal” (93).

Though Evans makes an important argument, his study is limited to a few titles, themes and directors. The entries are in the form of short sketches and nothing is discussed in greater detail. The discussion of film technique in relation to creating a powerful drama of war gives a new angle to debate on public reception of war films.

Frank J. Wetta and Martin A. Novelli argue “War” and its cult of endless victories contributes to America’s unique identity in the same way as does “geography, immigration, the growth of business, the separation of powers, or the inventiveness of its people” (Perret). Up to Vietnam, the first “television war,” Hollywood war films were the only source of knowledge of Americans about war. The “New Patriotism” in American films is a “repudiation of sentimental and ideological concepts” that compromises survival over cause. It celebrates loyalty to those in battle, the ability to survive “modern hyper-lethal weaponry and warfare, and the shared experience of battle.” Wetta and Novelli’s argument supports the debate on media bias and its effects on developing war ideologies and patriotism in viewers. Wetta and Novelli say the American major motion pictures do not revive patriotism to a degree that private and personal motivations supersede public rationales for war being fought. In the study they also provide a comparison of the cinematic conventions of the 1940s with the present. In the 1940s, the nation demanded the characteristic “honesty, maturity of intention, and emotional truth” from filmmakers and the reviewers condemned studio combat with romanticized men under the sense of “humanity and a deep moral.” In the present case, the Vietnam syndrome has exorcised the John Wayne syndrome as the country made by war faced the humiliation of defeat. Wetta and Novelli argue that the Vietnam films have a preoccupation with the defeat and the fear of taking casualties within the United States Army and among some military historians. Through the examples of early and late films, for example, G. I. Joe (1945) and Saving Private Ryan (1998), Wetta and Novelli analyze the changes in historical film process and its cumulative effect. Early fiction like G. I. Joe (1945) imparts an intimate experience of the expressive fact, though it fails to impart “adequate direct impressions” (865) of an individual’s war experience, while recent films transcend genre’s conventions but compromise morality for the highly immoral “haunted ground” (865). Additionally, Wetta and Novelli analyze the prominent influences of some newscasters through the History channel’s resurrections of war (866). The research focuses on certain prominent examples from cinema but makes a valuable contribution to film scholarship by analyzing the image of war as an image about survival or mass killing, killing or being killed, which is extremely unpleasant; it often follows purely personal motives behind chaos and realistic dying.

John Whiteclay Chambers II says that the scholarship on interventionist practices, the film industry, and U.S. foreign policy has failed to determine a relationship between the antiwar groups and the film industry. The significance of the scholarship lies in its provision of an insight in the foreign policy and into the place of movies in American public life. He identifies three separate entities of, so called, isolationists – internationalists, isolationists, and pacifists with distinct characters and their relationship to silent films and talkies. Internationalists, in opposition to military forces and collective security, advocated nonviolent methods to address war while the isolationist movement was neither internationalist nor pacifist (44). Chambers evaluations of the roles and pressures of leagues and alliances, for example, the pacifist Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), the interventionist National Council for the Prevention of War (NCPW), the anti-interventionist America First Committee (AFC) in determining peace and civil rights as well as their influence on films and talkies have lots of significance for rethinking the Vietnam movement. Through examples, they determine a relationship between film themes and the antiwar movement as both benefited from each other. The success of All Quiet on the Western Front (1930) proved that disillusioning antiwar pictures could be blockbusters and highly profitable. The Peace Films Foundation was founded in 1932. The Foundation employed imaginative methods to bring antiwar and pro-peace films directly to the masses (46). Chambers’ entries on the treatment of big antiwar and interventionist films, pacifists, isolationists, and internationalists efforts against newsreel glorifying war and their complex interrelationship to international peace and wars of the period conforms to war scholarship and adds another important thread to the web of rethinking and reevaluating Vietnam to transcend into society.

Some important documentaries that throw in information about interventionist practices and would be of interest to researchers are listed here. Choosing Sides: I Remember Vietnam (1996) is a compelling look back of Vietnam.
with a cause: voices of Students for a Democratic Society (2000) recalls experiences of the sixties students in “organizing communities to fight poverty” (Wellesley), racism, and the war in Vietnam. Winter soldier (1972) is a graphic portrayal of American atrocities in Vietnam based on testimonies of the veterans. The veterans strive to put up with the outcome of policy and conduct of U.S. government; it made them turn Vietnamese soldiers and citizens into non-human “targets” to kill, rape, and mutilate. The combination of scholarship supporting visual materials or vice versa increases their study value for reevaluation of the Vietnam War.

David Scott Diffrient discusses the archetypal symbolism in American cinema and newsreel in relation to American combat against communism in the Korean case. He claims that between 1940 and 1945, 500 WWII films were produced by Hollywood. Though the essay “‘Military Enlightenment’ for the Masses: Genre and Cultural Intermixing in South Korea’s Golden Age War Films” focuses on the works of Korean auteurs, it gives an insight into humanistic approaches in the Korean War films like in the case of Vietnamese cinema (Charlot, 446). For the purpose of emerging scholarship on the Vietnam War experience in academics, the information has significant value to recent trends of war studies in academia.

Peter Marin in “A Different War,” adding a whole new perspective to Vietnam War debate, says the hatred of war cannot be comprehended from the position of “the safe morality of civilian life.” He discusses the relation of abnormal circumstances to making normal men guilty of committing the barbarities of war. He quotes the example of a former American nurse, Anne M. Auger, in Vietnam who wished to murder an injured Vietnamese soldier who had killed several GIs and, even today, Anne is scared of such “overwhelming and almost uncontrollable feelings” (59). According to Marin, the Vietnam War anger comes for several reasons: the unrelieved combat, a war of attrition with no fixed goals for winning, the body counts became a perverted measure of victory, plentiful drugs, a loner’s war (isolated, private battles, and troop-less transportation), and the warriors of Vietnam were among America’s youngest warriors (60-3). Marin considers it a backlash that some Vietnam veterans volubly attack antiwar veterans (67). This whole debate on war anger basically reflect the vision of earlier mentioned debates on an initial U.S. inhibition from attacking or forming a firm policy for the region at the time of the demise of French colony in Vietnam in 1954. As discussed earlier, Steinman also reflected on uncertainties in Vietnam (13) in a similar fashion.

Like Marin above, Claudia Springer also discusses the postwar trauma in nurses (58). She points to pro versus con: hawks and doves, left and right dichotomies (58) in the so called balanced PBS series, Vietnam: A Television History (1983) which overlooks “ordinary people,” for example, nurses in Vietnam. She argues that the series constructs an official pattern of ideological implications and political needs under surface objectivities. The impressive archival research across a wide spectrum of opinions by historians, politicians, veterans, and antiwar activists does not explore the deeper meaning of war and inherently unstable consensus (54). The film is modeled along the media portrayal of the Vietnam War and the textual voice in its multilayered all-encompassing narrative belongs to the filmmakers (55). The documentaries exclude the civilian point of view (58) and heavily rely on the sixties antiwar activists to defend their positions and, in doing so, introduces unchallenged preconceived ideas; its agenda is determined by right-wing views (56). The series neither says “we are sorry” nor does it say “the U.S. acted benevolently in Vietnam” (60). Springer’s analysis of production and research flaws, especially lack of healthy and diverse social opinion in television programs mirror the value of public opinion in case of media bias.

In terms of media bias and institutional control and coding, J. David Slocum’s critique in “Cinema and the Civilizing Process: Rethinking Violence in the World War II Combat Film” becomes a valuable contribution to the Vietnam debate. Slocum discusses the revival of combat cinema in the late nineties. He insists these films rely strictly on “Hollywood’s military Ur-narrative” and acquire predetermined “standards of behavior and morality” in conforming to cinematic conventions “for imagining combat, fighting and killing” (35). He critically approaches the racial violence of war films and their complex relation to society’s coherence for patronizing individual social relations. He refers to Norbert Elias’ The Civilizing Process (1939) for adopting an alternative critical approach to military combat in WWII films, which helps in understanding the role of state and institutional power in regulating social behavior, particularly in case of a violent conflict. Additionally, he provides information on the development of “Manual for the Motion Picture Industry” (1942) which specified guidelines and principles of moral uplift and social progress in war films and its subsequent relationship to the combat environment and production of war films, documentaries, newsreels, shorts, and animated movies. Though the continuation of the tradition into recent scholarship of films lacks direct references, “it illuminates the meaning of combat films” and its influence on social relations (36-7). Slocum’s entries on the historical role of the state and institutional powers in molding public ideologies and determining social, emotional, and libidinal interaction are very valuable. His introductions into the power of the wartime narrative in affirming the wartime social fabric conform to the most important approaches to the rethinking Vietnam project.

Susan Jeffords offers a new dimension to the media bias debate by including the soldier. In “The New Vietnam Film: Is the Movie Over,” referring to Reagan’s dedication of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier,’ Jeffords states that Vietnam War films clearly convey the message that America did not lose the war because of the American soldier. They also prepare the viewer for another limited, but similar war “by providing a pseudo-closure and pseudo-victory to the war,” in effect, “closing the book” on the Vietnam War (187). In this
regard, the identity of the filmmaker of the cannon group “becomes most meaningful.” Jeffords points to an alarming hidden agenda of the films. She says it is the part of the schema to stage these films in new international anticomunist settings, “in regions” where “American military interventions” seem most likely. So, future soldiers can identify with locations in case of military conflict (187). These films portray enemies as stereotypical feminine, “sly, deceptive, weak, often irrational, and afraid” (189). They are determined to “restructure audience’s views of the Vietnam War” to recall the events in an acceptable manner (192). In the reconstruction of military conflict, the rebirth of the American muscle spliced with the reiteration of feminized inadequacy gives subtle and complex messages about ‘the open book’ of American military policy (194). Jeffords leaves the Vietnam debate at an alarming point. Where scholars are still critiquing the Vietnam War experience, Jeffords and Rollins are expecting future wars due to America’s image “as an international cop on the beat” (Rollins, 429). Jeffords believes that contemporary Hollywood films in their treatment of the drama of war prepare future soldiers for future wars by setting these films in regions of conflict, a hidden agenda of war films.

The historical scholarship and reference materials on Vietnam War (includes antivar publications in the U.S. forces, for example, Fatigue Press (Texas), Last Harass, (Georgia), Pawn’s Pawn (Missouri), Ultimate Weapon (New Jersey), Napalm (Tennessee), Blows Against the Empire (New Mexico), and many more) tends to offer a unanimous voice from all disciplines, which is rethinking the Vietnam War experience and condemning visual materials that raise human emotions in favor of wars. In spite of critical debates on media bias, war reception, and the rethinking Vietnam movement in academia, it appears that scholars still have the apprehensions of ideologically uncompromised conditions for future American wars and, therefore, subsequent creation of new spectacles by media. In the case of Vietnam, the debate has come a long way. The Vietnam War scholarship envisions visual meaning of war, narrative structures, psychoanalysis, war fandom, veterans’ trauma, hidden agendas, ideology and the official perspective of war, antiwar movement, memoirs, and rethinking Vietnam project in academics. Memories like Steinman’s (178) that made him revisit Vietnam with his Vietnamese wife (180); his father-in-law, Lieutenant Colonel Lan had no heart to leave South Vietnam only point to a change in the character of people who were in Vietnam during the war. These memoirs and scholarship hint at their desire for peace and to rethink Vietnam seriously. Plenteous scholarship on Vietnam, Vietnam films, documentaries, and memoirs is available online which people are accessing from their homes. The role of audience participatory fandom through websites has been realized both by the industry and academia (Shefrin, 81). In the context of Vietnam War’s future in academics, the study of Vietnam War films’ would be most useful as the majority of fans in fandom cults are young people who absorb unchecked information. Steinman says the cliché, “war touches the innocent in ways too sad to enumerate,” is worth repeating (64); the war turned the peaceful monks into extremists (68). The total awareness, the scholarship, the materials, as well as Malo and Williams entries on Vietnam film (includes 137 Vietnamese entries), and others from around the world shall form the basis for future study of the Vietnam War and provide the impetus for peace in the world.

References


