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**THE STATE OF VIETNAM WAR FILMOGRAPHY: ONE
DEPLOYMENT OF A CANON-LESS ARMY**

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It is not often that I get an audience composed mostly of historians and the media-related disciplines. So I want to exploit that opportunity. I am before you because I am the Curator of a singularly versatile collection of research resources concerning the public's perceptions of the Vietnam War - across the entire culture - both during and to the present day. But perhaps more important than that is the fact that the over-arching Collection of some 14,000 individual items provides an astonishingly rich matrix of evidentiary material that has evolved from the imaginative representations of the war between about 1961 and the present. These statements I'm making about this large and unique Collection - the largest of its kind in the world - must sound to you either enticingly vague yet promising, or, perhaps, simply exaggerated. So let me suggest to you how, as historians and media/communications scholars concentrating on film, you can rely on this extraordinary resource. I would like to provide a few "real world" examples of how such a resource can work for your own research interests.

Since the fundamental and intended purpose of this collection has always been to examine the nature of perceptions about the war through the dual aspects of experience that we know as memory and imagination, it is logical that television and film form a necessarily large component of this collection - which, incidentally, is known around the world as **The Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War Collection**. Both those media are present in the Collection, divided roughly between commercial or entertainment productions and what might otherwise be described as documentary productions. The film/TV component of the Collection stands right now at very close to 1500 productions. That's correct. 1500 dramatic productions. Until you see this many productions of one kind or another in one place, related to a single subject, you really cannot conceive of the affect it inevitably may exercise over a culture. For a moment, as you just sit there, try to think of even 20 films or TV programs that deal in some recognizable way with the Vietnam War. Well, OK, even if you WERE able to cite 20 Vietnam war films, now go ahead and imagine 10's of hundreds! Our annotated filmography alone lists almost 1700 film titles. **[holding up the index: THIS is the 24-**

page, single-spaced index to this filmography.] Now, as you sit there floating silently in viscous disbelief - these stunning numbers firmly in mind, let me throw out a few data whose tangible sources can be physically examined in the Collection: there were more than 35 popular TV series that had clear and repeated references to the war – references either through a character line, a plot design, or thematic motifs. Not in every episode, of course, but I am counting those with two or more episodes, if the program made it past an initial season. These series run from early *Matt Houston*, *Hawaii 5 – O*, and *The A-Team* episodes all the way up to the current programs like *The West Wing* and *JAG* and *South Park*. *The Simpson's* alone have two permanent characters who carry forth Vietnam war and veteran themes across several seasons. And series like *Magnum, PI*, *Street Justice*, *X-Files*, and *JAG* each produced between 9 and 12 episodes. If we were to add the overt series like *China Beach*, *Vietnam War Story*, and *Tour of Duty* (never mind the 2-season Saturday morning cartoon series RAMBO) we would count 40 separate TV series and something around 75 episodes that deal clearly with the war. I would emphasize that not only do we make these individual episodes available, but we try in every case to have an accompanying screenplay or shooting script on site. We do this for many reasons, not the least of which is that we can demonstrate to students how a text is transmitted from one medium to another. Particularly in the case of the Vietnam war films, we do this so that a student may witness the mechanics of a writer's craft. The student is able to SEE an author's holograph manuscript become a page proof, then become a review copy, become a first hardbound edition, then paperback, then a draft screenplay, then a shooting script, finally the film version itself. Right now, in the Collection, a scholar can watch and examine this progression for something around 75 novel/film combinations. I have spoken so far about the TV component of the larger Collection. Another example of how the film archive can be used is suggested by a project I myself created and completed as a conference paper presentation more than a decade ago. Having noticed anecdotally that images of military officers appearing in commercial or Hollywood film productions were almost universally negative in their characteristics, I set out to document the truth of this impression. I proceeded to identify from among our holdings of 600 Vietnam War films only those titles that included a military officer in some significant way in the film. It could be a major character, a plot element, or a use of the figure as a motif or important metaphor. I found what to me was an astonishing 67 such films that used the figure of an American military officer from the Army, Air Force, Navy, or Marines. This project culminated, as I say, in a conference presentation that was later published in the scholarly journal **Viet Nam Generation** under the title "The Image of the Military Officer in Films Concerning the Vietnam War." The thesis proved to be accurate and the evidentiary nature of this phenomena became the topic of a presentation that I gave by invitation to two sections of Major Elliott Gruner's English course about the war sponsored by the English Department of the US Military Academy at West Point. It was the amazing number of films that reproduced and mutated the officer image that drew the attention of these military professors. The paper was eventually made available to both the Naval Academy and the Air Force Academy with equal interest. And a final example of how the La Salle University Vietnam War film holdings might be used as a resource is suggested by a project undertaken by an undergraduate Honors student. She wished to document the evolving nature of images of women as they appeared throughout the history or films made about the war. There were no fewer than 75 or so films that formed

the matrix of images of women as they appeared in the myriad roles assumed by females. The 75 films she reviewed produced 5 categories of characters (i.e. nurse/nurturer, soldier/combatant, civilian/victim, professional/journalist/spy, heroine/protagonist), each of whose images showed at least some evolution according to date of production and release. For those of you in the audience right now thinking of developing a conference paper or a chapter to be added to a book already in progress or for a thesis topic for graduate student - the SAME project could easily be revised now with significant updating, together with further extensions of the those original 5 categories, but now with each having, a non-American component. My real point in citing some of these research examples (beside, of course, the shameless attempt at promoting the vast riches contained in this scholarly resource) is to lend a sort of shock value to your sense of the extent to which film exists with connections to the Vietnam war. I have found, over the years of working with scores of visiting scholars and graduate students, that both groups tend to grossly underestimate the sheer numbers of films that include significant references or contexts relating to the war.

Even in this very brief review of this research resource, I would be short-sighted, indeed, if I failed to mention another sort of research that can be conducted within the film holdings of **The Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War Collection**. This would be focused on textual research as opposed to content. For example, a scholar might wish to use the shooting script that actually belonged to the cinematographer for Coppola's *Apocalypse, Now*, or the shooting script belonging to Penelope Milford, the female lead next to Jane Fonda in *Coming Home*. Such scripts are useful because they often contain the different color pages inserted into them that represent actual changes made to the scripts after filming had begun on the sets. Additional to that sort of technical material held at La Salle University (we have about 200 scripts of both film and TV) are also scores and scores of the complete professional publicity Press Kits used in publicity campaigns containing still photos, posters, biographies, and so on for each film. There are as well over 300 movie posters representing releases both here and in Europe and Asia. This is a medium that can be quite interesting in that the poster images do not always the same when the film is released in countries other than its origin and the translations can be hilarious.

But this descriptive parade of utilities to be found in **The Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War Collection** pales, believe it or not, when compared to one of the truly remarkable research resources that has been produced both from the existing Collection film holdings as well as from citations captured world-wide which represent films and TV productions not necessarily all held in the La Salle University Vietnam War Collection.

I refer to the breathtaking annotated filmography compiled and created by John K. McAskill, Systems Librarian at La Salle University. This is a work that has no peer in film history today. It lists nearly 1700 films! It begins with a short-duration travelogue film by Lumiere in 1898 and continues to films that were released this year.

In the case of this resource we have allowed an expansion of our criteria for an item's inclusion that would not apply to the core collection of material in the larger **Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War Collection**. In the larger Collection an item must be from or about the war since 1961 and concern some aspect of the war seen through the prism of imagination (e.g. novels, short stories, poetry, music, graphic art, etc.) For the purposes of the filmography and the film holdings themselves, we have included documentary modes, drama productions, and historical productions other than documentary titles. And the beginning date has been delimited to any year in which a film production of any kind has been created dealing with Vietnam. The introductory comments by the compiler appearing in the bibliography on La Salle University's library website states the following:

'This bibliography includes citations for reviews and criticism of all known theatrical films, television movies, and television drama series related to the Vietnam War. PDF files with bibliographic citations for individual films or television programs are accessible via the hypertext links in the title list below. This title list includes the original film or television program title with cross references from television series episode titles and foreign language or other title variations on the original title of the work.

For my purposes, the scope of what constitutes a 'Vietnam War' film is intentionally broad. I have included in this canon any dramatic film or television program which: (1) describes events in Vietnam preceding or contributing to American involvement; (2) depicts war related events during the period of active American involvement (1961-1975); or (3) shows the continuing effects of the war in Vietnam and elsewhere since 1975. I have included full episode title coverage of television series where a major character is a Vietnam veteran. Though only a few episodes in these series may reference the Vietnam War explicitly, the development of known 'veteran' characters may be of interest to Vietnam War studies. For series where only selected episodes mention Vietnam, only the relevant episodes have been listed.

A complimentary '**Annotated Bibliography of Vietnam War Film Criticism,**' available elsewhere on this site, includes citations to general sources which discuss three or more dramatic films related to Vietnam's wars in the twentieth century. Where these sources have been cited in the specific film review and criticism bibliographies, their publication information has been abbreviated to [GB] i.e. [general bibliography]. Full citations for these works may be retrieved from the annotated general bibliography.

This bibliography has been compiled over a period of fifteen years from a variety of sources. It is meant to be exhaustive, but is inevitably limited by the (chiefly American) print and online sources which have been accessible to me." -- John McAkill, Compiler.

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