

# This is the End? : An Investigation into War Film and Fiction

By Sean Fogarty

Student no. 1573513



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## Abstract

In my thesis I hope to explore war continuity in selected works of war fiction and film. I will be looking at the imperialist conquering of the African Congo and how these events have an effect on the history of future wars, the examples I will be using are World War 2 and The Vietnam War. By doing this I hope to find some links between these periods to demonstrate how war is a repetitive cycle in human history. These past wars may help to get a better picture of how war still goes on today, and from our history, we can get a better idea of how we came to the present and perhaps not make the same mistakes in the future. As the title suggests one question I want to explore is if This Is The End? By which I mean has are slow apocalypse of constant war already begun? The selected works I am doing are and will be laid out as follows,

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# Introduction

## Title

The Title “*This is the End?*” Is a reference to The Doors song of the same name. *This is the End* is the main theme in the *Apocalypse Now* soundtrack, and the lyrics convey a world in apocalypse, meaning the end is now. The relation between the song title and movie title suggest that an apocalypse has already begun, as there is an unending wave of war throughout the existence of human history it is an interesting connotation, that the end has already begun, hence apocalypse now. The dissertation will explore selected works of war fiction and films to examine the continuity of war, from Imperialism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the Vietnam war in the 1960’s and 70’s.

## Background: The Congo occupation

The occupation of the Congo Free State in 1885 by the Belgian King, Leopold II was a violent and brutal campaign. In 1876, King Leopold summoned a conference in Brussels, which resulted in the creation of the “The international Association for the Exploration and Civilisation of Africa”.<sup>1</sup> Leopold originally explored East Africa, but was advised by H.M. Stanley to explore the Congo region. The first station was established in Vivi in February 1880 and in his four years Stanley, as head of Leopold’s association, the “International Association of the Congo”, had set up 22 stations on the Congo.<sup>2</sup> In the early years in the Congo there was little to report as trade was not interfered with. But by 1891 when the wealth in rubber and ivory took a sharp increase, various monopolies were set up to exploit this. From this the conditions only worsened for the natives, who were forced to slave

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2006, p.99.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.100.

labour, buried alive, sold as food and brutally punished if they refused to work. The cruelty of the treatment of the African people will be discussed in detail in chapter one, but it was this cruelty and desire for land and money that created a new era in history, and one that would have an effect on proceedings in the future.

## **World War II**

World War I that precluded was fought over colonial territories, among other things. The competition for territories, such as the scramble for Africa, was one of the factors that built tension between the European nations leading to war. World War 2 was fought for many reasons as well, but the final straw was when Germany set off on a campaign east for expansion, causing Britain to declare war on them. Germany expansion was nothing more than imperialism, but given the times, and the fact they invaded other European countries, was deemed unacceptable. World War 2 brought with it new forms of propaganda, such as Radio broadcasts and film, meaning that propaganda could reach an unprecedented level. Many of these World War 2 propaganda movies glorified war, which can be seen as encouraging future wars.

## **The Vietnam War**

The Vietnam War had links with Imperialism also, as it was originally a French colony before the Americans got involved. The Vietnam War was a very contentious war, as there was no clear reason why America got involved other than to stop Dwight Eisenhower's domino theory. The theory was that if one country should become communist in a region the rest would follow suit like dominos. The theory had no real evidence to support it and the Vietnam War became a real struggle as America, after 1968, had many troubles on both the

home front and in Vietnam. Issues like the Civil Right Movement, John F. Kennedy's assassination; The Cuban Missile Crisis and Space Race were going on at the same time. In the War itself the Viet Cong's guerrilla style warfare, good organisation and booby traps were catching the Americans by surprise. With the American economy in decline, America position in Vietnam became untenable, and eventually they pulled out around 1975. The Vietnam War was the first war to have the mass media involved on a huge scale. There were journalist covering the war both home and abroad, and it was the first war to be aired on television. This was one of the reasons there was so much controversy over the war, as the truth could not be glossed over, and the war itself was there for all to see.



## Chapter 1. Imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*

“We penetrated deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness” – Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*<sup>3</sup>

*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad tells a story of the European colonisation of Africa, as seen through the eyes of protagonist Marlow. As he travels up a river in the Congo he witnesses many acts of brutality forcing him to question his imperialist ideology and moral values. The topic of Imperialism is described excellently in Conrad’s book, as offers a raw view of the brutality received by the natives, but also considers the strong ideological concepts of the time of domination and superiority. Conrad discusses the horror of imperialism, but also the lack of foresight to any alternative method. This chapter will explore the topic of imperialism in *Heart of Darkness*, in its ideological dominance and continuity. The two areas focuses on will be the imperialist ideology, integrated from Marlow and Kurtz and gender and race.

### **Gender and Race**

Gender and Race are subjects that are portrayed in *Heart of Darkness*, and in both the cases of women and the natives, they are made subservient to men. Women are few and far between in the novel, in fact there are only five women recorded and all have attributes stereotypical of a 19<sup>th</sup> century women. The first three women Marlow encounters are in the administration building and in each case they are conveyed as irrational beings, whose only use is to serve men. For instance Marlow encounters what he recalls to be,

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<sup>3</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Books Ltd., 2000, p 62.

“compassionate secretary who full of desolation and sympathy...with an air of taking an immense part in all sorrows.”<sup>4</sup> Marlow describes the secretary as very emotional. When referring to her as compassionate he is using the word from its original meaning, which is to take on the suffering of others. Therefore Marlow is describing this woman as taking full sympathy on him, making her job only as a service to him. By taking on Marlow’s sufferings, the secretary is becoming a servant to Marlow, one that does not act for herself, but takes orders. The way Marlow portrays the secretary is in deep contrast to how he describes himself, palpable in such lines as, “I always went my own road and on my own legs where I had a mind to go.”<sup>5</sup> Marlow sees himself as a logical man that follows his own path, but in the case of the secretary he sees her as a manifestation of his sorrows. This is implying that Marlow as an imperialist man is superior to the secretary, whose only function is to serve those in authority. The representation not only serves as a stereotypical vision of women, but of the nativity towards imperialism. Conrad writes:

“Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it- completely. They- the women I mean- are out of it- should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse.”<sup>6</sup>

Conrad here is describing the naivety of women at the time towards imperialism. He points out this naivety is forced by the imperialist themselves who must, “help let them stay in that beautiful world of theirs”. The imperialist do not want women to know of the horror of imperialism, because of their sympathetic tendencies demonstrated out earlier. If women

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<sup>4</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, W.W Norton & Company Ltd., 1991, pp.10-11

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.48.

are the more sympathetic of the two genders, then men cannot tell women of the horror of imperialism, as they would widely object to it.

Jeremy Hawthorn in his essay *The Women of Heart of Darkness*, says that women serve as an apology by the imperialist powers for their exploitation.<sup>7</sup> The weak and passive depiction of women in the novella suggests they are powerless to do anything but be left in the dark about the brutal exploitations. Hawthorn writes that women embody the corruption of idealism, which is pointed out when describing Kurtz's mistress:

"She came forward, all in black and white, of sickness and death. She has no energy no living presence... This fair hair this pale visage, this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy halo from which the dark eyes looked out at me."<sup>8</sup>

This image, according to Hawthorn, replicates the inner corruption of idealism. Nothing can be completely good or bad; therefore what Conrad is offering us is an interception of women both as the good sympathetic being and the darker depraved being. The image is shown as a living dead a white and pale face, but the eyes suggest that decay and corruption lie within. Conrad gives a dualistic impression of women's external beauty and pureness, but a darker internal nature.

Racism is another big topic in *Heart of Darkness*; Conrad got much of his information from the six months he spent in the Congo. The appalling treatment of the slaves by King Leopold II's campaign is summarised by George Washington Williams in a letter to the king. He wrote, "Cruelties of the most astounding character are practised by the natives, such as burying the slaves alive in the grave of a dead chef." He also said "Between 800 and 1000

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, p.406.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p73-74

slaves are sold out to be eaten by the natives of the Congo State annually.”<sup>9</sup> The quotation emphasizes the cruelty of Leopold’s regime, the kind of cruelty the Conrad witness during his time in the Congo. Marlow is very blunt and descriptive in some of his analysis of the natives, for example:

“a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling under the drop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us—who could tell? We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse.”<sup>10</sup>

Marlow captures the raw and savage nature of the native people and describes them as a means of sounds and limbs rather than people. To Marlow they are seen more as animals than people, as they make many noises, which Marlow does not understand how to reply. He’s unsure if the crowd are cursing, praying or welcoming them and this speaks volumes about the incomprehension imperialist had for African history, tradition and culture.

Marlow concludes that the reason he does not understand them is because unlike him these people are insane, which brings up the imperialist ideology of trying to civilise the African people. Instead of trying to understand the African culture, imperialists generally just forced their Westernised culture to the natives and would see their culture as “prehistoric” and backward. The dehumanising of Africans is further demonstrated when Marlow observes an African who has somewhat adapted to European society. Marlow says, “And between

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<sup>9</sup> George Washington Williams, “An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II”, in John Hope Franklin, *George Washington Williams: A Biography*, University of Chicago, 1985, p.248.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, W.W Norton & Company Ltd., 1991, p.35.

whiles I had to look after the savage who was fireman. He was an improved specimen; he could fire up a vertical boiler. He was there below me, and upon my word, to look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat walking on his hind legs. A few months of training had done for that really fine chap.”<sup>11</sup>

Marlow finds the Westernisation of this man comical, and compares him to a dog performing tricks to please humans. There is a definite feeling of mastery in Marlow, whose ideology is formed from the imperialist traditions he is raised with. Although Marlow plays the role of an imperialist explorer, and throughout the book lines like these give the impression he feels superior to the Africans, imperialism is something he really struggles with. At the beginning of the book, when reflecting on his journey up the Congo, he criticises the imperialists in the lines:

“They grabbed what they could for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind- as is very proper for those who tackle darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking away of those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it much.”<sup>12</sup>

The colonialism that Marlow witnesses, clearly has an effect on him as he no longer sees the natives as savages, but illustrates they are people with a “different complexion”. Not only does he view the Africans differently, but simultaneously recognises the brutality of imperialism, with its seizure of land and murder on a mass scale. Marlow’s journey up the river and his meeting with Kurtz has completely changed his views on imperialism, which leads onto the next section.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p36.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.7.

## The Ideology of Imperialism: Through Marlow

One thing that Conrad suggests is that domination and inequalities were not a new perennial fact in human society. However the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were the beginnings of it on a global scale. He explains this in the lines:

“It is impossible to convey the life- sensation of any given epoch on one’s existence - that which makes it truth, it’s meaning its subtle and penetrating essence... We live, as we dream... alone”<sup>13</sup>

Imperialism holds a much larger history than the brief period allocated to it. For centuries before hand countries had been invading each other, Marlow giving the example of the Roman invasion of Britain.<sup>14</sup> Europeans are seen to be the oppressors of imperialism, and indeed in the case of Africa this is true. However, Marlow is pointing out that Britain was once subject to imperialism, and as he puts it “darkness was here yesterday.”<sup>15</sup> Edward W. Said writes in his essay *Two Visions in Heart of Darkness*, that to cut off any interdependency of history would be inaccurate and senseless.<sup>16</sup> Even with no new lands to explore today imperialism is still alive, Said speaks of global imperialism and hypothesises:

“We live in one global environment with a huge number of ecological, economic, social and political pressures tearing at it’s only dimly perceived, basically uninterrupted and uncomprehend fabric. Anyone with even a vague consciousness of this whole is alarmed at how such remorselessly selfish and narrow interests- patriotism, chauvinism; ethnic,

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<sup>13</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Books Ltd., 2000, p 50.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, W.W Norton & Company Ltd., 1991, p.5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p.6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.422.

religious, and racial hatreds- can in fact lead to mass destructiveness.”<sup>17</sup> With globalisation new complexities in imperialism exist on a much larger network than ever before. The socio-economic structure means that areas are more divided than ever, bringing with it as Said writes “patriotism” and “chauvinism”. It is therefore natural that people tend to learn their own history and virtues, but do not look into the history and culture of other nations. For example in this case if the history of the British Empire is thought than the histories of places like Africa being invaded become secondary. In other words when people are in search of information they will naturally consult their own authorities, men such as Kurtz and Marlow, men of hierarchy. The imperialist system therefore sets up a barrier between its empire and other empires, and makes consulting another empire for a different perspective unthinkable.

According to Said, *Heart of Darkness* has two arguments, for imperialist the virtues of European and Western culture worldwide, or that his narrative belongs to certain space in place and time.<sup>18</sup> The first argument suggests the Western countries would develop as forces and this could be deemed true up to World War 2, which was fought mainly in Europe. Even when the colonies of these European powers were liberated, some still had political bonds to their masters, other had trading agreement, so the era of imperialism was not only shaped on the history that preceded it, but shaped what was to come. The second argument is one that Conrad notes when he stated you can never truly define an epoch, he recognised that he was a man from a specific era and knew no better than imperialism. Because of this Conrad sees no alternative to imperialism.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.422.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.426.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.426.

The later argument is relevant to Marlow, as although he lives and functions in the system of imperialism, he struggle with justifying it, but like Conrad can find no alternative to the situation. In Marlow's case he explores because of the fame and glory it brings. Marlow claims, "Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia and lose myself in all the glories of exploration."<sup>20</sup> For Marlow it is the glory that imperialism and exploration bring that have him fascinated in it. His interest from a young age emphasizes the power of the ideology at the time, as it was a career that would bring fame, riches and glory. The narrator describes this in the following lines:

"And indeed nothing is easier for a man who has, as the phrase goes, "followed the sea", with reverence and affection, than to evoke the great spirit of the past upon the lower reaches of the Thames. The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service crowded with memories of men and ships it has borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled- the great knights-errant of the sea."<sup>21</sup> The two men referred to are Drake, the first English man to circumnavigate the globe and was knighted by Queen Elizabeth I. Franklin led a disastrous expedition in search of the Northwest passage, in which the ships got stuck in Artic ice.<sup>22</sup> The narrator portrays the dangers and fame that come with exploration, but sees the later as the more prominent. This is an important point because at the time an explorer was a highly valued trade that most men could both aspire to and earn a good living off it. Marlow eventually finds himself trapped in a paradox as he can no longer justify colonisation after traveling up the river, but

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Penguin Books Ltd., 2000, p.27.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, W.W Norton & Company Ltd., 1991, p.4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p.4. (footnote 4.)



he also is unable to see an alternative to imperialism, therefore if he does not obey the system, he will be unable to receive the high class of the seamen before him. Said quotes Hannah Arendt in his book *Culture and Imperialism* and she writes:

“the maelstrom of an unending process of expansion, he (Marlow) will, as it were, cease to be what he was and obey the laws of the process, identify himself with anonymous forces that he is supposed to serve in order to keep the whole process in motion, he will think of himself as a mere function, and eventually such functionality, such an incarnation of the dynamic trend, his highest possible achievement”<sup>23</sup>

By addressing the men at the dock it is possible Marlow has not given up on his explorations, simply because he sees no alternative then to go with the status quo and to continue with his life on the sea. Marlow is trapped in the system of imperialism and within this system he is at the highest possible apex of his career through exploring. He therefore not only can see no viable alternative, but any alternative would only degrade him to a lower level of the social sphere.

In Conclusion the main issues in *Heart of Darkness*, which are all linked to European expansion in Africa, are race, gender and the topic of imperialism itself, as seen through Marlow. When first arriving in the jungle Marlow views on women and race seem to drastically change after his meeting with Kurtz, which will be discussed in detail in the final chapter on *Apocalypse Now*. At the beginning of the book Marlow describes women as compassionate, passive beings, should be kept in their own world. He depicts them as subservient to men, and their entire purpose is to follow orders rather than have conscious free will. However, by the end of the novel, possibly due to a change of perspective, possibly

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<sup>23</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1994, p27.

due to Kurtz's mistress being African, this view has transformed. Marlow no longer sees women as passive, but sees them as a corrupt and decaying vision of idealism. Perhaps Marlow sees a flaw in their inability to act on their sympathies, so in the case of colonialism their passive and quietist attitude is something Marlow can no longer adhere to.

The issue of race has also transmuted, Marlow when first entering the Congo sees these men as beasts and can make little sense of their culture. Marlow is confused how these men should live, the best example when he describes the black "fireman" as an "improved specimen"<sup>24</sup>, suggesting that the training and Westernising he has received is a positive thing. However, on the same page Marlow points out that, "He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank, instead of which he was hard at work."<sup>25</sup> These lines illustrate that although Marlow does not understand the African culture, he is aware that it is part of their heritage and history, and to take that away is to take away the individual's identity. When reflecting on the whole journey on the river Nile, Marlow's opinion has changed, he sees imperialism as a brutal force of robbery and murder and the only justifiable reason for it is the difference in complexion of the Europeans and Africans. The cruelty of imperialism is conveyed in the final words of the book, when the darkness of Africa stretches across to London, the narrator describes it in the lines, "The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky- seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness."<sup>26</sup> The parallel of darkness in Africa and London perhaps captures the inner corruptness of people and their determination for power through means of mass slaughter. It questions not only if Western society has the right to

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<sup>24</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, W.W Norton & Company Ltd., 1991, p36.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p.36.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p.77.

coerce its culture on other regions, but questions if they are not the savages for their acts of brutality towards the Africans.

Imperialism in the context of greater history is also brought up in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad points out that imperialism followed a larger history of wars and invasions and that it was an accumulated effort, rather than just an era in history. If this is true, then there is another important message to take from the book, that if imperialism followed a larger history, then it too will prelude and affect the history after that point. Said wrote that imperialism was something that would not cease, but consolidate. Add to this the fame and riches brought by imperialism, as pointed out by Marlow, then imperialism and colonisation are set to continue. If we look at the future wars, fought in a relatively short time after this book, we can see that colonialism was at the heart of World War 1, and German expansion to the East in World War 2 was nothing short of imperialism. With Italy invading Abyssinia and receiving no punishment for it, Marlow's philosophy of imperialism being justified only when the victims have different complexion is something that remained true in future wars. There were of course many more reason for both World Wars than just imperialism and colonialism, but both were major factors and the era of imperialism paved the way for many more years of warfare.

## Chapter 2

### *Slaughterhouse 5: The revision of the Second World War*

*Slaughterhouse 5* is a book written by Kurt Vonnegut about the fire-bombing of Dresden in 1945, at the very end of the Second World War. Vonnegut wrote about it, not only because he was there, but because it had been largely overshadowed by the atom bombings of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Both of these bombings, according to Vonnegut, had a lower casualty rate than Dresden.<sup>27</sup> He sees history as very important because horrific events like Dresden should not be forgotten, but rather serve as a lesson to future generations. *Slaughterhouse 5* was written in 1969, which is in the middle of the Vietnam War. Vonnegut saw many parallels between World War 2 and the current war and in how both related to American popular culture in particular. The Second World War was remembered as “the good war”<sup>28</sup>, as during these years, and prior to them, the American economy boomed. Apart from the attack on Pearl Harbour there was no fighting done on American soil, so America came out of the war unscathed apart from the casualties abroad, because of its late arrival in the war, in December 1941. For this reason, Americans see the Second World War as a success and this is what Vonnegut is trying to correct. In popular culture World War 2 is portrayed as glorious and adventurous, but Vonnegut wants to reveal the truth about the horror of the Second World War and drive home the message that we cannot allow it to happen again. This chapter will discuss how propaganda attempted to justify the death casualties in the Second World War and how, for Vonnegut,

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<sup>27</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children's Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death*, New York: Dell, 1971, p188.

<sup>28</sup> Christina Jarvis, *The Vietnamization of World War II in Slaughterhouse 5 and Gravity's Rainbow*, War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities, 2003, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/> p. 97.

propaganda is one of the most striking similarities between World War 2 to Vietnam, and the chapter will discuss how propaganda and time travel are used to link the two wars. It will also look at how trauma plays a role in repression subsequent to these important events.

### **Cinema and Popular Culture**

One distinctive feature of World War Two was its propaganda which was very prominent on both the Allied and Nazi side. There were various methods used by the regimes, posters, radio broadcasts, books; but film was a new medium that was becoming hugely popular and was a fantastic way to capture the imagination of the public. The Germans and Americans released many movies to prepare the public for war, to spread anti-Semitism and to gain support for the war regimes, a good example being *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949). Vonnegut saw these propagandistic movies as a means of justifying war and in the opening section of the book he mentions John Wayne, the hero of *Sands of Iwo Jima*, as an embodiment of the glories of warfare. These old movies inspired war ideology and gained support for it. It comes to no surprise that Nixon's orders, were to make a new World War 2 movie *Patton*, when the Vietnam War was raging, as it highlighted war as adventurous. This was a ploy so enlistment numbers would rise and America could attack Cambodia.<sup>29</sup> Vonnegut saw these movies were being used to gain support for the current struggle in Vietnam and wanted to revise the myth of World War 2 being the "good war", so that people could see the parallels between the past and present wars. In *Slaughterhouse 5*, Vonnegut recognises the similarities between both wars. He hoped to shed some light on the past so wars in the future could be stopped.

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<sup>29</sup> Christina Jarvis, *The Vietnamization of World War II in Slaughterhouse 5 and Gravity's Rainbow*, War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities, 2003, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/>, p. 95

“If World War 2 was the straightforward movie everyone could be in, Vietnam was the sequel that was so confused that it demanded a review of the original. Perhaps the seeds of later confusion were present in the midst of seeming clarity.”<sup>30</sup>

With so many films being released glorifying the Second World War, Americans through their popular culture came to recognise war as a good thing. All the positives of World War 2, for America, were portrayed in these films, and none tried to capture the horror of war. Everybody therefore, assumed World War 2 was a straight forward war, but when the Vietnam War came about people started to question whether war was as straight forward as the movies depicted. This was due to the role the media played in Vietnam, and as it was the first live recorded war, the horror of it was not able to be glossed over. The public then started to revise the Second World War, as like Vietnam it had many complexities, and the films on it were merely propaganda to ensure future wars. In war stories, Vonnegut saw a power to engender additional conflicts. He wanted to write a different type of war story, one that did not glorify war, but one that captured the destructive elements of war. When meeting up with an old war buddy Bernard O’Hare, the narrator tries recollecting memories to write a book. Bernard’s wife Mary however, is not fond of the idea, as she thinks that, “wars are partly encouraged by books and movies”<sup>31</sup>. She demonstrates her anger of propaganda when she says;

You were just babies in the war – like the ones upstairs! . . . But you're not going to write it that way, are you. . . You'll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you'll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-

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<sup>30</sup> George Roeder, *The Censored War* quoted in Christina Jarvis, *The Vietnamization of World War II in Slaughterhouse 5 and Gravity’s Rainbow*, War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities, 2003, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/>, p. 95.

<sup>31</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children’s Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death*, New York: Dell, 1971, p15.

loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we'll have a lot more of them. And they'll be fought by babies like the babies upstairs.<sup>32</sup>

From the opening pages propaganda and the continuity of war are linked, as there is a connection between World War 2 and Vietnam, there is also a connection from generation to generation. Not only was it common for fathers who fought in the war to encourage their sons to fight for their country, but the ideals in the war films mean that they can be passed from generation to generation through the medium of film. Vonnegut here is suggesting that movies exploit the "blood and guts"<sup>33</sup> and military toughness of war through figures like John Wayne and Frank Sinatra. These figures became cult heroes, and it was these men that created a fantasy of war being glorious and heroic.

The honour and heroism of these films is mocked in the scene with the British prisoners of war. The scene is filled with absurdity and dark humour as there are many American soldiers starving but the British, according to the narrator are, "clean and enthusiastic and decent and strong."<sup>34</sup> Even though the war is nearly over and food is short, the British are vastly oversupplied as they are receiving 500 Red Cross packages rather than just 50. For the English, war is just another game to be played, like "checkers and chess and cribbage and dominos."<sup>35</sup> They embody the heroes that are in the war movies and according the German guards they are exactly what war is meant to be, which they claim is "stylish, reasonable and fun."<sup>36</sup> The British prisoners of war convey a pastiche of older generation war heroes and ideals, as well as serving as heroes for future

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p13-14.

<sup>33</sup> Christina Jarvis, *The Vietnamization of World War II in Slaughterhouse 5 and Gravity's Rainbow*, War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities, 2003, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/>, p. 96.

<sup>34</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children's Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death*, New York: Dell, 1971, p94.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p94.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p94.

generations. Vonnegut is again illustrating the link between past and present and how ideology transforms the notion of what war is, making it more acceptable for future generations.

### Time Travel

One method that Vonnegut uses throughout the novel to link the two wars is Billy's time travel, by means of which is connected with all time and space. In the philosophy of Tralfamadorian the two wars are happening at the same time, as explained in the words, "All moments, past, present and future, always have existed, always will exist."<sup>37</sup>

Vonnegut constantly plays with the theme of time travel, which is particularly evident in Billy's trip to the luncheon at the Lions Club, the narrator describes it as following, "Billy's smile as he came out of the shrubbery was at least as peculiar as the Mona Lisa, for he was simultaneously on foot in Germany 1944 and riding in his Cadillac in 1967."<sup>38</sup>

Later when he gets to the luncheon a speaker gets up to address the war in Vietnam and the narrator paraphrases:

"He said that Americans had no choice but to keep fighting in Vietnam until they achieved victory or until the communists realised that they could not force their way of life on weak countries... He told of terrible and wonderful things he had seen. He was seen in favour of increased bombings, of bombing North Vietnam back into the Stone Age, if it refused to see reason."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p27.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 58.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p59-60.



The speaker, according to Christina Jarvis in her essay *The Vietnamisation of World War 2 in Slaughterhouse 5 and Gravity's Rainbow*, is meant to be a thinly disguised Curtis Lemay, commander of the U.S air force, who suggested they should bomb Vietnam "back to the Stone Age".<sup>40</sup> He was the man behind many of the bombings in Japan and also set the location of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and later advocated that nuclear weapons should be used on Vietnam. He was ruthless in his aim to speed up the end of the war as his civilian casualty rates in World War 2 were 41% and 91% in Vietnam.<sup>41</sup> Lemay not only represents a connection between the wars, but an ideology of victory at all costs, his speeches were also manipulating to the public as he would use propaganda to say such deeds were done for the greater good.

Vonnegut gives an authentic insight into how necessary these bombings really were. Although Lemay deems them as completely necessary, the narrator in *Slaughterhouse 5* depicts all bodies as dying and helpless in Dresden as, "hundreds of corpses" <sup>42</sup>, therefore giving no need to bomb them as they are already awaiting death. Billy and the other soldiers, unlike the British with their "washboard" stomachs and muscles "like cannonballs"<sup>43</sup>, are conveyed as unfit for war and therefore such force does not need to be used against them. The narrator describes Billy as having a "chest and shoulders like a box of kitchen matches"<sup>44</sup>, demonstrating his is not like the cult heroes represented in the British prisoners of war or movie heroes like John Wayne. Vonnegut is creating figures that completely contrast to the character is American popular culture, and is convey a

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<sup>40</sup> Christina Jarvis, *The Vietnamization of World War II in Slaughterhouse 5 and Gravity's Rainbow*, War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities, 2003, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/> p. 99.

<sup>41</sup> Craig David & Michael Egan, *Extreme Situations: Literature and Crisis from the Great war to the Atom Bomb*, Barnes & Noble, 1979, p1.

<sup>42</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5 or the Children's Crusade: A Dance With Duty*, Doubleday Dell, 1991, p.214.

<sup>43</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children's Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death*, New York: Dell, 1971, p94.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, p.32.

more realistic message that it was kids who fought this war and not men. Military officers like Bertram Rumford, who Billy meets in the hospital, see operations like the bombing of Dresden, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the napalm bombings of Vietnam a success as long as they serve their function, to kill. Therefore the bombing of Dresden is seen to him as a “howling success”<sup>45</sup> because he thinks in military terms. Vonnegut criticises this view as many of the victims were helpless and were even civilians in some cases. Although the media illustrate this is a necessary evil, Vonnegut emphasises they were not necessary and caused many deaths.

Roland Weary and German soldiers are portrayed as overweight and “crippled”<sup>46</sup> respectively. Not only are these bodies not fit for war, but they also represent the “undesirable” effect that Germans used to dehumanise the likes of Jews, cripples, homosexuals etc. Any seen in their society unfit for waging war would be sent to concentration camps. The camp in *Slaughterhouse 5* is similar to a concentration camp, in the sense that people brought into the camp are seen as objects or numbers and are completely dehumanized as the narrator explains;

“To the guards that walked up and down outside, each car became a single organism which ate drank and excreted through its ventilators. It talked or yelled sometimes through ventilators, too. In went water and loaves of black bread and sausage and cheese, and out came shit and language.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse 5 or the Children’s Crusade: A Dance With Duty*, Doubleday Dell, 1991, p.191.

<sup>46</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children’s Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death*, New York: Dell, 1971, p.150

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p70

The prisoners brought in are viewed as cargo by the German soldiers, just another object rather than a person. This is an ideology used in Nazi Germany on Jews and other undesirables, subordinated to second class citizens in German society, and were blamed for many things including the loss of World War 1, Germany economic problems and were even linked with Communists.<sup>48</sup> Vonnegut is attempting to underline the fact of the true brutality of war in all its horror, rather than gloss over it like the American action movies.

### **Trauma and Tralfamadorian ideology**

Billy's attempt to deal with the trauma of the bombing of Dresden is a huge factor in the novel. Billy plays a victim his whole life, from his father throwing him in the deep end of the pool as a boy, to the bombing of Dresden and the plane crash he was in.<sup>49</sup> When he wakes up in the hospital, Billy experiences a traumatic experience, similar to the ones Sigmund Freud describes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principal*. Billy gets a series of flashbacks to many of the, what he perceives to be traumatic moments of his life. We do not hear much of Billy's father, but from the two stories he seems to force Billy to be manly, and as he is a passionate hunter, Vonnegut is making a possible connection between a father training his son to go to war. Before being ironically killed in a hunting accident, while Billy serves his time in the army, Billy's father pushes him into the deep end of the pool, in a sink or swim method. He also brings him to the edge Grand Canyon and makes him look down. By constantly making him confront his fears, Billy's father is attempting to prepare Billy for war, but he is in reality causing psychological damages similar to that of Freud.

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<sup>49</sup> Alberto Cacicedo, "You must remember this": Trauma and Memory in *Catch-22* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Critique, 2005, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/>, p. 365.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud examines the case study of a boy who is left traumatised by the abandonment of his mother. Rather than repress the memory, which Freud hypothesized the Pleasure Principle on, the boy re-enacted the event over and over again.<sup>50</sup> This case caused Freud to rethink his critiques on trauma, as more war veterans were having the same problems; they were reliving their experiences rather than repressing them. However, the more horrific the memory, the more lightly the unconscious will defend itself with repression.<sup>51</sup> Billy's experiences of reliving events in his life through time travel are extremely similar to the conditions of trauma Freud describes as follows:

"The study of dreams may be considered the most trustworthy method of investigating deep mental processes. Now dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristic of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright."<sup>52</sup>

Billy relives his traumatic experiences often waking up, suggesting Billy's time traveling is just a dream. In the hospital bed when he meets Rumford, Billy is eager to tell him all about Dresden and the bombing, his attempts at getting his attention are described by the narrator as follows;

"There in the hospital Billy was having an adventure very common among people without power in time of war: He was trying to prove to a wilfully deaf and blind enemy that he was interesting to hear and see."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Trans. James Strachey. Standard Ed. New York: Norton, 1975, P9.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p14-15

<sup>52</sup> Freud, Sigmund and James Strachey (Translator). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. 1920, <http://www.egs.edu/library/sigmund-freud/quotes/>

<sup>53</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children's Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death*, New York: Dell, 1971, p193

Billy initially tries to tell Rumford of the horrors of Dresden, however he turns to passivism and the philosophy of the Tralfamadorians when he states, "It was all right. . . everything is all right, and everybody has to do exactly what he does. I learned that on Tralfamadore."<sup>54</sup> According to Tony Tanner, Billy commits to quietism stemming from a sense of hopelessness.<sup>55</sup> Billy's inability to deal with the trauma he has experienced has forced him to adapt a pacifist philosophy. The Tralfamadorians do not believe in the question "why?" or in personal freedom. They believe that all time is linked together and that we cannot change what happens, epitomised by the phrase "so it goes", which pops up after any form of death in the novel. Death is greeted with inevitability by the Tralfamadorians who believe it is predetermined destiny. They think humans would be better off if they, "ignore the awful times and concentrate on the good ones."<sup>56</sup> The problem with this method is it does not allow for change, if the passive philosophy of the Tralfamadorians is adopted then horrific events such as the bombing of Dresden will always be written off as fate. Vonnegut emphasizes this in the Tralfamadorian's philosophy of the universe's destruction, as they press a button that blows up the universe. When asked by Billy why they don't stop this, they reply, "He has always pressed it, and he always will, we always let him and we always will let him. The moment is structured that way."<sup>57</sup> The ideology, which Billy successfully spreads via radio and newspapers, suggests that all unspeakable acts can be accounted for because they are "structured that way". This captures the typical human reaction accurately, because we allow the horrific events in a war to happen, and like Billy we would rather repress them than remember them to serve as lessons.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p198.

<sup>55</sup> Tony Tanner, *The Uncertain Messenger: A Reading of Slaughterhouse-Five*, Critical Essays on Kurt Vonnegut. Ed. Robert Merrill. Boston: Hall, 1990, p 128.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p117.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p117.

In conclusion, Vonnegut depicts a novel that does not celebrate war, in the way it is often celebrated in popular culture, but shows the depraved and sinister side of war. His hope make people think differently about war, so war would not pass on from generations, as many were inspired by movies they saw and support the war campaign, or even enlisted in Vietnam. Propaganda was a powerful weapon used to manipulate the masses, and it was extremely effective in film. Vonnegut refers to cult heroes like Frank Sinatra and John Wayne who embody the glorification World War 2 in American, but in his own novel portrays a darker truth under the surface. He links World War 2 to the more contentious Vietnam War in order to create parallels from the dehumanisation of soldiers and civilians. The narrator describes the body count in Vietnam in the words, “And everyday my government gives me a count of corpses created by military science in Vietnam.”<sup>58</sup> The body count emphasizes the brutality of war and the effort each side will go to in order to achieve victory.

The speaker, who is meant to represent Lemay, perhaps is the best indication of governmental justification and covering up of war. The fire-bombing of Dresden is done to “hasten the end of the war”<sup>59</sup>, creating an image of manipulation in war, who merely wants to win by any means necessary, and cares little for human life. Vonnegut captures the notion of greed and prosperity for the victors dictating the war in the lines;

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<sup>58</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or the Children’s Crusade: A Duty Dance with Death*, New York: Dell, 1971, p210.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p180.

"Trout, incidentally, had written a book about a money tree. It had twenty-dollar bills for leaves. Its flowers were government bonds. Its fruit was diamonds. It attracted human beings who killed each other around the roots and made very good fertilizer. So it goes."<sup>60</sup>

These lines emphasize how the peoples corruption and selfishness and how ultimately they will sacrifice the needs of others for their own needs. The final line suggests that the masses conforming nature to this system and "so it goes" represents the inability of change in the system, as nothing is done about it.

Billy's trauma in *Slaughterhouse 5* is similar to that of Yossarian in *Catch 22*.

Both characters want to confront their repression, but when they do they cannot use it in a positive way and they are quietist in their response. For Billy he resorts to the philosophy of the Tralfamadorians, which leads him to accept that events cannot be changed and everything is predestined. This defeatist attitude serves war, rather than countering against it, and takes away the possibility of change. In order to deal with his trauma Billy creates a new religion, to make a new vision of which war is acceptable. Eliot Rosewater says to him, "I think you guys are going to have to come up with a lot of wonderful new lies or people aren't going to want to go on living."<sup>61</sup> Billy creates his new Ideology or religion in order to deal with the traumatic events of Dresden. This is how the traumatic effects of war are dealt with in *Slaughterhouse 5*, but Vonnegut also makes a link between the Vietnam War and World War 2, through popular culture and time travel. The next section of the thesis is on Vietnam movies, and will explore how these differed from the World War 2 movies Vonnegut discusses in *Slaughterhouse 5*.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p167.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p101.

## Chapter 3 Full Metal Jacket

*Full Metal Jacket* is separated into two sections, the training at the U.S Marines Corps boot camp and the 1968 Tet offensive in Vietnam. It gives an interesting portrayal of the Vietnam War because, it did not get caught up in any single issue and attempted to give an overarching, balanced view on Vietnam. The War was so contentious that public opinion was completely split on it and according to Geoffrey Perret an unbiased account had yet to be made. He summarised,

“There is a wide variety of general works on the war; nearly all written from a strongly held view that the war was wicked or stupid, a mistake or a plot, a crime of capitalism and imperialism, or a worthy effort by idealists to save South Vietnam from Communist tyranny. A truly objective history of the Vietnam War has yet to be written, but it will no doubt appear one day.”<sup>62</sup>

The sour opinion of the war was clearly affecting all the works on the war and no accurate account of the war, according to Perret, had been written. Rich Schweitzer in his essay *Born to Kill: S. Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket as Historical Representation of America's Experience in Vietnam*, he outlines the balance *Full Metal Jacket* achieves, as the story is not told from a single perspective.<sup>63</sup> *Full Metal Jacket* is loosely based on Gustav Hasford's novel *The Short Timers*, and the script was written by Hasford, Stanley Kubrick (the director) and Michael Herr. Michael Herr was a vital figure in making the film as he was a journalist that went to Vietnam and wrote about his experiences in his book *Dispatches*. Some of the scenes from

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<sup>62</sup> Geoffrey Perret, *A Country Made by War: From the Revolution to Vietnam - The Story of America's Rise to Power*, Random House, 1989, pp. 609-610.

<sup>63</sup> Rich Schweitzer, *Born to Kill: S. Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket as Historical Representation of America's Experience in Vietnam*, Film & History, 1990, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/> p. 63.



both *Full Metal Jacket* and *Apocalypse Now* come directly from Herr's experiences. This chapter will focus on the "Duality of man"<sup>64</sup> in both the boot camp and Vietnam sections; it will also look at the role of the Media in Vietnam, as it was the first war to have footage shown on television.

### **The Duality of Man**

The boot camp section of the movie demonstrates the through training and conditioning recruits go through to transform them from civilians to killers. The section outlines two main characters, Private Joker and Private Pyle, who both have very different experiences of the Marine Corps. Joker uses his wits and personality to rise through ranks and become squad leader, while Pyle fails at everything he does and is punished by the strict Sargent Hartman. The duality of man is represented by the contrasting fortunes of these characters. Joker rises through the ranks when asked about his religious beliefs, he is initially responded to with scorn as it was not the answer Hartman was looking for. However, Jokers "guts"<sup>65</sup> for not reversing his answer impresses Hartman, the dialogue goes as follows:

Sergeant Hartman: "Private Joker. I don't believe I heard you correctly."

Private Joker: "Sir, the Private said 'No, Sir,'Sir."

Sergeant Hartman: "Well you little maggot, you make me want to vomit." [Strikes

him.] 'You had best sound off you love the Virgin Mary. . , Now you do love the

Virgin Mary, don't you?"

Private Joker: "Sir, negative, Sir. The Private believes that any answer he gives will

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<sup>64</sup> Stanley Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

be wrong and the Drill Instructor will beat him harder if he reverses himself. Sir."<sup>66</sup>

There are many religious references in the movie, and this is perhaps to represent the training as a religion in itself. The training is made to shape moral values and ethical values of the soldier, much like a religion does.

Hartman constantly makes religious references that link the Marine Corps with God. He feels they are doing God's work for him as they are killing people, thus playing God. This is evident in the lines,

"Today... is Christmas! There will be a magic show at zero-nine-thirty! Chaplain Charlie will tell you about how the free world will conquer Communism with the aid of God and a few Marines! God has a hard-on for Marines because we kill everything we see! He plays His games, we play ours! To show our appreciation for so much power, we keep heaven packed with fresh souls! God was here before the Marine Corps! So you can give your heart to Jesus, but your ass belongs to the Corps! Do you ladies understand?"<sup>67</sup>

Hartman conveys that God and the Marine Corps work together to defeat Communism and they also deliver God "Fresh Souls". He creates an ideology within the Marine Corps that they can be salivated by doing the work of God and even suggest later by completing the training programme they are becoming immortal. He says, "always remember this: Marines die. That's what we're here for. But the Marine Corps lives forever. And that means you live forever."<sup>68</sup> Hartman is indoctrinating the soldiers so that, through their religious beliefs, he can convert them into killers. By suggesting God is anti-communist, he is breaking any moral

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<sup>66</sup> Rich Schweitzer, *Born to Kill: S. Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket as Historical Representation of America's Experience in Vietnam, Film and History*, 1990, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/> p.64.

<sup>67</sup> Stanley Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

ties the soldiers have with killing the Vietnamese. Killing is illustrated as a necessary deed to give God more souls and that by doing this they are serving God. Hartman gives the recruits false promises in order to as he puts it, “build indestructible men, men without fear.”<sup>69</sup> Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard write in their book *The Hollywood War Machine* critique that this section of the movie is made to show, how the military transforms individual through a matrix integrating aggression, sexual impulses, and killing.”<sup>70</sup>

Joker’s adaption to this new ideology is rapid, but Pyle on the other hand cannot conform so easily to become a killer, and struggles to convert from a civilian to a soldier. Pyle is made choke himself and march with his pants down while sucking his thumb by Hartman for constantly getting all drill instructions wrong. Hartman eventually gives up on Pyle and tells the recruits, “from now on, whenever Private Pyle fucks up, I will not punish him. I will punish all of you.”<sup>71</sup> The punishments his fellow recruits receive cause them to tie Pyle to his bed during the night and beat him with wrapped bars of soap, in attempt to turn him into a cadet. It proves to be the turning point for Private Pyle, but the conditioning the recruits gave him worked to well as Pyle goes completely insane and becomes an expert with his gun. On the day of graduation Pyle proves that he has been conditioned to a cold blooded killer when he kills Hartman before shooting himself. Hartman’s formula of making men into killers has turned against him, and his own monster in the form of Pyle has his revenge.

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard, *The Hollywood War Machine: Us Militarism and Popular Culture*, Paradigm Publishers, 2007, p.97.

<sup>71</sup> Stanley Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

The duality of man is represented in the contrast of the characters Private Joker and Private Pyle. The phrase comes up when Joker is asked by a Colonel what he wears as a peace symbol and has “born to kill” written on his helmet, he replies:

“Private Joker: I think I was trying to suggest something about the duality of man, sir.

Pogue Colonel: The what?

Private Joker: The duality of man. The Jungian thing, sir.”<sup>72</sup>

Joker is referring to Carl Jung’s theories on extraverted and introverted personalities and the collective unconscious. The personal conscious is composed of an individual repressed thoughts and feelings, while the collective consists of primordial images found in all humanity, religion being Jung’s main focus. Jung hypothesised that there were two sides to human nature in these fields and he summed up, “Every good quality has its bad side, and nothing that is good can come into the world without directly producing a corresponding evil. This is a painful fact”<sup>73</sup>. The duality of man represents the ability of both good and evil and that every man is born with these properties, in order to achieve one the other must be explored for balance, and Jung writes, “A psycho-neurosis must be understood as the suffering of a human being who has not discovered what life means for him...The patient is looking for something that will take possession of him and give meaning and form to the confusion of his neurotic mind.”<sup>74</sup> Both sides are explored to give meaning, as without that we cannot make sense of the world around us. On the suffering of man Jung claims, “Man can stand the most incredible hardships when he is convinced that they make sense.”<sup>75</sup> Both

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Carl Jung, *Modern man in search of a soul*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1933, p199.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, p.225.

<sup>75</sup> Carl Jung, *Man and his symbols*, Doubleday, 1964, p.76.

Joker and Pyle confront their archetype or evil sides in the movie and both are transformed into killers against their own instinct. Pyle is beaten into submission, while Joker has sympathy for the wounded Vietnamese girl and shot her to put her out of her misery. Hartman by deploying religious references to combat is creating a meaning to kill and is satisfying the psyche, which young calls “by nature religious.”<sup>76</sup> Hartman is conditioning the soldiers by satisfying both the duality complex and in giving meaning to this. They are told they are serving God and will “live forever”<sup>77</sup>, which is a possible hint at salvation. They will also be doing evil by killing people, thus exploring the duality of man in its total form.

### **The Role of the Mass Media**

The second part of the movie takes part in Vietnam, 1968, which was the year of the Tet offensive. It is largely seen as the turning point of the war and is known as the “hard year”, mainly due to the struggles both in Vietnam and on the home front with the decline of the American economy.<sup>78</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson’s inability to choose between Vietnam and the American economy brought riots, protests and political assassinations to America, which will be discussed in detail later. The level of media coverage in the war was unprecedented to any war that had precluded it and this created a very different ambience among American soldiers and civilians. In *Full Metal Jacket* the role of the media is highlighted, as Joker himself becomes a journalist covering war stories and the soldiers are given interviews about their perspective on the war and opinion why America are in Vietnam. *Full Metal Jacket* puts one of the reasons down to America’s history and popular culture. Before they are interviewed the unit discuss Vietnam through the means of popular culture:

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<sup>76</sup>Aniela Jaffe, *Memories, dreams and reflections*, Vintage Books, 1989, p.10.

<sup>77</sup> Stanley Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

<sup>78</sup> William O’ Neill, *Coming Apart: An Information History of America in the 1960’s*, Quadrangle Books, 1971, p.360.

Private Joker: Is that you, John Wayne? Is this me?

Private Cowboy: Hey, start the cameras. This is "Vietnam - the Movie."

Private Eightball: Yeah, Joker can be John Wayne. I'll be a horse.

Donlon: T.H.E. Rock can be a rock.

T.H.E. Rock: I'll be Ann-Margret.

Doc Jay: Animal Mother can be a rabid buffalo.

Crazy Earl: I'll be General Custer.

Private Rafterman: Well, who'll be the Indians?

Animal Mother: Hey, we'll let the gooks play the Indians.<sup>79</sup>

Cowboy underlines how with the camera rolling during combat, soldiers would often play the role of their favourite movie stars and would attempt to act brave for the camera.

Michael Herr notes the link between popular culture and war in *Dispatches* when he writes,

"Come on", the captain said, "We'll take you out to play cowboys and Indians"<sup>80</sup> These

methods were used to rally the troops and it worked to great effect. Herr questions the

sense of bravery these implications gave them when he asks, "How many times did

someone have to run in front of a machine gun before it became an act of cowardice?"<sup>81</sup>

Herr demonstrates how the role of the camera in Vietnam changed the way the soldiers

acted and caused them sometimes to try play the hero, which he questions if it was derived

from bravery or stupidity.

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<sup>79</sup> Stanley Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

<sup>80</sup> Michael Herr, *Dispatches*, Pan Books, 1978, p.55.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p.59.

In the interviews, popular culture is again mentioned, but there is also a variety of opinions as to what Vietnam is like, and why the Americans are in Vietnam. Animal Mother claims America are there to win, that victory is the only reason, while Eight Ball says, “Personally, I think, uh... they don’t really want to be involved in this war. You know, I mean... they sort of took away our freedom and gave it to the, to the gookers, you know. But they don’t want it. They’d rather be alive than free, I guess. Poor dumb bastards.”<sup>82</sup> Animal Mother thinks they are only there for war, while Eight Ball thinks they do not want to be there, but have to fight for the freedom of the Vietnamese. Animal Mother does not believe they are fighting for the freedom of the South Vietnamese and even claims “we’re shooting the wrong gooks”.<sup>83</sup> This emphasizes the confusion of the Vietnam War, and the many contrasting perspectives on it. The confusion of the war is described by Michael Herr as:

“You couldn't find two people who agreed about when it began, how could you say when it began going off? Mission intellectuals like 1954 as the reference date; if you saw as far back as World War II and the Japanese occupation you were practically a historical visionary. 'Realists' said that it began for us in 1961, and the common run of Mission Hack insisted on 1965, post-Tonkin Resolution. . . Anyway, you couldn't use standard methods to date the doom.”<sup>84</sup>

Herr makes a very important point because when the war begins is fundamental to America’s right to be there, as if the origins are 1954, than the political legitimacy of America’s involvement becomes more questionable. If South Vietnam was a legitimate

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<sup>82</sup> Stanley Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Michael Herr, *Dispatches*, Pan Books, 1978, p.46.

country, America was aiding it from invasion. However, if there was no division set then America was getting involved in a Civil War, which would be much more contentious.<sup>85</sup>

The opinion on the war was also mixed in America, to such an extent there were mass protests campaigned against the war, and many of these broke out in riot between civilians and police. The interviews with soldiers, like the ones seen in *Full Metal Jacket*, and other television coverage served as the most comprehensive means the public sought information from the war. A Roper organisation survey was conducted in 1964, which indicated 58% of the population would use the television for war information, narrowly beating newspapers at 56%. In 1972 the levels rose from 64% to television and newspapers dropped to 50%.<sup>86</sup>

The stats emphasise the role the media had both on the journalist writing on the war in newspapers and those reporting it. Vietnam was the first war to have such extensive media coverage and as some reporters were in the thick of the action, Michael Herr for example and other tried to cover up the truth of the war, public opinion was completely split. Paul Fussel writes about this divide in his book *Class* and he regards it as:

“Probably the most awful class division in America, one that cuts deeply across the centre of society and will poison life here for generations, is the one separating those whose young people were killed or salvaged in the Vietnam War and those who, thanks largely to deferment for college students, escaped.”<sup>87</sup>

One example of this is the protest at Colombia University after links were discovered of the University supporting America’s involvement in Vietnam. A wide protest consisting of several thousand people took place and Mark Naison, in his book *White Boy: A Memoir*, calls

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<sup>85</sup> Rich Schweitzer, *Born to Kill: S. Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket as Historical Representation of America's Experience in Vietnam*, Film & History, 1990, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/>, p.66.

<sup>86</sup> Aniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media in Vietnam*, Oxford University Press, 1989, p.106.

<sup>87</sup> Paul Fussel, *Class*, Ballantine Books, 1984, p.14.



it, “the most powerful and effective student protest in modern American history.”<sup>88</sup> The effects on the University itself were drastic as not as many students enrolled the next year because of the protests. Along with the Civil Rights Movement, America was becoming a place of violence, protests ranging from equal right to anti-Vietnam. The media played a huge role in the Vietnam, as it effected the soldier’s actions and thought, from attempting to be heroic in front of a camera, to questioning America’s involvement in Vietnam. *Full Metal Jacket* portrays these discrepancies about the war and offers no over-arching view on it, but a balanced one.

In Conclusion, *Full Metal Jacket* gives a fully accurate and panoramic vision of the Vietnam War. When commenting on the film Kubrick said:

“The Vietnam War was, of course, horribly wrong from the start, but I think it may have taught us something valuable. We would probably be fighting now in Nicaragua had it not been for Vietnam. I think the message has certainly gotten through that you don’t even begin to think about fighting a war unless your survival depends upon it. Fancy theories about falling dominoes won’t do in the future.”<sup>89</sup>

Kubrick hypothesises that although the Vietnam War was in essence bad, it may have thought America valuable lessons. The Domino theory was put forward by American President Dwight D. Eisenhower, who claimed that if one of area fell under the Communist control, then the surrounding countries would follow in a domino effect. He saw positives in some aspects of the Vietnam War, as well as negatives and gives a balanced view on the war with the duality of man theory and the role of the mass media. *Full Metal Jacket* illustrates the importance of balance, as he blames humanity for the war, as much as the American

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<sup>88</sup> Mark Naison, *White Boy: A Memoir*, Temple University Press, 2010, p.94.

<sup>89</sup> Gene Daniel Phillips, *Stanley Kubrick: Interviews*, University Press Mississippi, 2001, p.185.

government. By demonstrating the ability of good and evil in all people, Kubrick is suggesting human nature is to blame for, however he is also conveying that this nature is indoctrinated by the role of hierarchy and mass media. When Pyle refuses to become a killer he is forced by both Hartman and his fellow recruits, suggesting both sides are at fault. Kubrick creates a duality in the mass media, that it creates both positive and negative reaction to the war. Timothy Corrigan, in *A Cinema Without Walls* talks about the role of the media in *Full Metal Jacket* and Oliver Stone's *Platoon*. He argues:

“For both, the Vietnam War represents a watershed in human history, not just because of the guerrilla violence of a new warfare but because of the new level of media complicity and duplicity in perpetuating that violence. In both the war and its media coverage, the unique horror is the drama of contingencies, of the unpredictable violations of boundaries and spaces: booby-traps explode anywhere at any time; killers remain unseen or faceless or indistinguishable from allies; boundaries constantly give way so that platoons must bomb inside their own perimeters. The only real victories are the media victories.”<sup>90</sup>

Corrigan sums up the confusion and complexity that was the Vietnam War, and this is a view that Kubrick emulates. By making no clear answer to the movie Kubrick is leaving the interpretation to the audience to decide. This is how the duplicity of man and the Mass media are utilised in Stanley Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket*.

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<sup>90</sup> Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture after Vietnam*, Rutgers University Press, 1991, p46.

## Chapter 4 Apocalypse Now: Insanity and Imperialism

*Apocalypse Now* follows Captain Benjamin Willard up a Cambodian river in search of Captain Kurtz. According to the director Francis Ford Coppola, the journey is meant to represent a voyage back in time and further into madness and he admits in a documentary called *Heart of Darkness: a Filmmakers Apocalypse* that making the movie nearly drove him insane as he did not know how to finish it.<sup>91</sup> The film is based loosely on Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and conveys some similar messages, not only on Vietnam, but on war and imperialism in general. Coppola use references to imperialism to illustrate that it is still alive, and Vietnam is just the latest casualty. This essay will discuss how Willard is driven insane by the horrors that surround him and how imperialism is utilised in *Apocalypse Now* to convey an anti-war message through scenes such as the attack of the Vietnamese village, the French Plantation and the meeting with Kurtz.

### **Bill Kilgore and the *Flight of the Valkyries***

Willard and his crew need help to get to the foot of the river in Cambodia, in order to achieve this they meet with Colonel Bill Kilgore for assistance. Kilgore refuses to transport the crew at first as he says the situation is "too hairy".<sup>92</sup> Kilgore, whose very name suggests brutality, demonstrates no remorse when killing, evident when spreading a deck of cards over the dead Vietnamese soldiers as a body count. However, Kilgore bizarrely changes his mind and helps Willard when he realises a famous surfer by the name of Lance B. Johnson, is among Willard's ranks. When this is discovered, and Willard's destination coincidentally is

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<sup>91</sup> *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, Directors: George Hickenlooper, Eleanor Coppola, Fax Bahr, 2007

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

a hot surfing area, Kilgore performs a complete U-turn and agrees to transport the crew to the foot of the river.

*Apocalypse Now* differs from traditional war movies in the sense that the action is normally brought to a dramatic climax. *Apocalypse Now* offers no such thing, and the action gets progressively slower through the film, which would unsettle any viewers familiar with the traditional war movies.<sup>93</sup> The attack of the Vietnamese village would come an unexpected surprise to those familiar with World War 2 movies, as it is not short of action although it is early in the movie. Helicopters fly in formation to Wagner's *Flight of the Valkyries*, which is played to scare the Vietnamese, according to Kilgore. This scene is examined in *A Cinema Without Walls*, by Timothy Corrigan and he summarises David James when saying;

"In the collapse of history, setting the high cultural spectacles of operatic crisis next to the music halls of contemporary pop aligns and blurs the two strains of pre-classical culture to describe and inscribe a human subjectivity collapsing and dispersing before the narratives of history."<sup>94</sup>

The Wagnerian opera replaces the sixties pop music that preceded it. This creates a blend of the old and the new, in the sense that it is an old opera song playing, but the battle is being fought in a modern war machine, the helicopter. Coppola is combining history with the present to create a blurred vision of an omnipresent conflict, used to portray the continuity of war.

The attack on the Vietnamese village is transformed into a theatrical or cinematic spectacle through Wagner's opera. Corrigan writes that the music is played to "transcend the

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<sup>93</sup> Pamela Demory, *Apocalypse Now Redux: Heart of Darkness Moves into New Territory*, Literature Film Quarterly, 2007, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com>, p. 347.

<sup>94</sup> Timothy Corrigan, *A Cinema Without Walls*, Rutgers University Press, 1991, p39.

historical moment in order to live it.”<sup>95</sup>, and the music is meant to symbolise war, one example being it was used in D.W Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*. Kilgore uses the song so the soldiers get caught up with sense of responsibility to be heroic and brave like the heroes in the World War 2 movies. The song makes the soldiers act without realising the death and destruction they are causing, and thus performs as justification, or a form of repression against the act. In *Apocalypse Now* the *Flight of the Valkyries* serves as method of indoctrination, the soldiers are made believe war is a game or a movie and soldiers thus act as if they are playing a role. This is noted by Michael Herr, who wrote the internal dialogue of Willard, in *Dispatches*. He describes the men in Vietnam being possessed by the movies they had seen as follows:

“I keep thinking about all the kids who got wiped out by seventeen years of war movies before coming to Vietnam to get wiped out for good. You don’t know what a media freak is until you’ve seen the way a few of those grunts would run around during a fight when they knew that there was a television crew nearby; they were actually making war movies in their heads, doing little guts-and-glory Leatherneck tap dances under fire, getting their pimples shot off for the networks. They were insane, but the war hadn’t done that to them. Most combat troops stopped thinking of the war as an adventure after their first few firefights, but there were always the ones who couldn’t let that go, these few who were up there doing numbers for the cameras... We’d all seen too many movies, stayed too long in Television City, years of media glut had made certain connections difficult.”<sup>96</sup>

In the film the soldiers in the helicopters are also playing a role, trying to be the heroes they have seen in movies and transforming war into an act of bravery and adventure. Wagner

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p39.

<sup>96</sup> Michael Herr, *Dispatches*, Pan Books Ltd, 1978, p169.

becomes the soundtrack to the movie and by playing the song Kilgore is triggering the soldiers' memories of these movie scenes and they act their part out by bombing the village. The men have been conditioned in such a way that they see themselves as serving their country and fighting against the evils of communism. The presence of the camera also manipulates the soldiers to believing their heroics may be shown to the American's at home, which would cement their place as a national hero.

There are absurd references made throughout the scene, which are used to illustrate the imperialist nature of the Americans. Kilgore contrasts between the Americans and the Vietnamese when he claims, "Charlie don't surf."<sup>97</sup> Kilgore is differentiating the Americans from the Vietnamese, and the imperialistic virtues are bringing these cultural values to make Vietnam more like their home, America. It is of course absurd that surfing is being held up as proof of the superiority of American civilization. The extreme limitations of Kilgore's perspective are something that is evident in this scene as Kilgore thinks little about Vietnamese being killed and more about surfing and victory. He calls the Vietnamese "savages", thus devaluing their culture and dehumanising them. Various contrasts are put forward by Coppola, the music inspires the American troops, but strikes fear into the Vietnamese civilians and soldiers. Kilgore notes the cultural differences, the Vietnamese do not surf or share the same culture as the Americans, and Kilgore portrays this as a negative thing. There is also Kilgore's statement to consider that he, "loves the smell of Napalm in the morning" and it "Smells like victory."<sup>98</sup> To Kilgore the smell of the Napalm is a positive thing because it gives him some assurance of victory, but to the Vietnamese it is something that is associated with fear, destruction and death. Kilgore does not care about the civilian

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<sup>97</sup>Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*, Paramount Home Entertainment, 1979.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

casualties as he bombards the village with bombs, and while the town burns one of the helicopter speakers sends an ironic message, “we are here to help you”.<sup>99</sup> With the brutality of Kilgore’s campaign, Willard compares the absurd nature of him to Kurtz and wonders how Kurtz man can be deemed insane and the Kilgore sane. Willard contemplates where the line of insanity is drawn in this war, conveyed in the lines, “If this is how Kilgore fought the what, I began to wonder what they really had against Kurtz.” The confusion of the Vietnam War is displayed in this scene, as not only are there vast differences between the American and Vietnamese perspectives, but also differences between the savagery of Kurtz and Kilgore. Kurtz is only deemed insane after he has killed a U.S officer, so the only difference between the two is who side they are on, and who they have killed. The conflict perspective from within the army itself is possibly best illustrated in Oliver Stone’s *Platoon*, where two members of the same division collide over the harsh treatment of the Vietnamese, ending with one killing the other. This illustrates the view Colonel Lucas takes in *Apocalypse Now*, as he sees one form of brutality in the form of Kilgore acceptable and another in Kurtz as an act of insanity.

In David Desser’s essay *Charlie Don’t Surf*, Desser points out that although these movies convey an anti-war message, they lack any treatment on the Vietnamese perspective. He writes the following:

“A focus on us, on what the war did to us, on how we entered Vietnam with either good or bad intentions, but never on Vietnam as a historical site, never on the Vietnamese as

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

genuine subjects, as people with culture, a heritage, a political agenda, even a cultural and political confusion all their own.”<sup>100</sup>

Although the Vietnamese are evidently sympathised with in the movie, they are never given their perspective on the story, and perhaps this is where many movies on Vietnam can be criticised as they show everything from the American perspective rather than have a balance.

### **Apocalypse Now Redux: Moving towards Heart of Darkness**

*Apocalypse Now Redux* was an extended version of *Apocalypse Now*, which made a closer connection to the imperialist virtues between *Apocalypse Now* and *Heart of Darkness*. The most notable difference between the two movies is the addition of the French Plantation scene, which Willard and his crew mistake for an abandoned outpost. The plantation itself and the people in it appear to be right out of the 1950's, when the original troubles in Vietnam started. It also connects to the idea that the crew go back in time when going up the river.<sup>101</sup> Walter Murch wrote in Peter Cowie's book about the scene, that it was meant to serve as: “an interlude to give you some emotional, political background as to why the Americans were in Vietnam... Because the French had been there before and had come to a tragic end”<sup>102</sup> By making the connection with the French, Coppola is reminding the cinema audience of French colonisation of Vietnam prior to American involvement. By doing this Coppola is linking the Vietnam War to a wider level of imperialism, but also making a close connection between *Apocalypse Now* and *Heart of Darkness*. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow also comes to an abandoned outpost, and here he finds Towson's book *Inquiry into*

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<sup>100</sup> David Desser, “Charlie Don't Surf”, *Inventing Vietnam*, Templer University Press, 1991, p.97.

<sup>101</sup> Katrin Shams- Eddien, *American Myths in Apocalypse Now*, GRIN Verlag, 2003, p9.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Cowie, *The Apocalypse Now Book*, Faber, 2000, p.110.



*Some Points of Seamanship*. Both the book and the Plantation represent the European intrusion into foreign countries.<sup>103</sup> The book makes Marlow, as the narrator says, “forget about the jungle and the pilgrims for a moment in the delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real.”<sup>104</sup> Similarly the crew in *Apocalypse Now Redux* are impressed with the French cooking and civilised manner, in great contrast with what they have witnessed outside of the plantation. Chef, who studied French cooking is most notably impressed when claiming, “the food is really unbelievable—the wine, the sauces”<sup>105</sup> Apart from underlining the authenticity of the scene, the importance of which is mentioned by Coppola in the film documentary *Heart of Darkness: A Filmmakers Apocalypse*, Coppola is linking the movie to Conrad’s book on many levels. For example, linking the high culture of the West, and the attitudes to it, with the barbarity of the same West.

Along with the historical significance of the scene, Coppola throws in confusion; the French are adamant they belong in Vietnam. One of the French men says “here we don’t lode this piece of earth, we keep it! We will never lose it, Never!”<sup>106</sup> The speaker argues that the French have more right to be there than the Americans, because they are content with living in the elegant household they have made, while the Americans bring destruction and death. The French officer believes the Americans should leave Vietnam and learn from the mistakes of the French. The officer states:

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<sup>103</sup> Pamela Demory, *Apocalypse Now Redux: Heart of Darkness Moves into New Territory*, *Literature Film Quarterly*, 2007, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com>, p. 343.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, University of Wisconsin, 2006, p38.

<sup>105</sup> Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, (dir. Carmine Coppola), 2001.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

“You don't understand our mentality, the French officer mentality. At first, we lose, in the Second World War. I don't say that you Americans win. but we lose. At Dien Bien Phu we lose, at Nigeria we lose, at [illegible] we lose!”<sup>107</sup>

Another younger man says to Willard: "Why don't you Americans learn from us? From our mistakes? Mon Dieu, with your army, your strength, your power, you could win if you want to! .., You could win!"<sup>108</sup>

The French see Vietnam as a lost cause and urge the Americans not to become obsessed with it. America's history is also illuminated, and because they have an extremely successful history and can afford to lose this one, while the French in comparison have a much more negative recent history. The reference to various histories of imperialist conquest is paralleled in *Heart of Darkness* when Towson's book reminds Marlow of the Roman conquest of Britain.<sup>109</sup> The progression of Imperialism is something underlined in Edward Said's book, *Culture and Imperialism*. He sums up, “all that imperialism, far from swallowing up its own history, was taking place in and was circumscribed by a larger history.”<sup>110</sup> Imperialism was caused by a long history that preceded it and was something that continues to the present day. This something *Apocalypse Now* makes palpable, that we are doomed to repeat the same history over again, unless we recognise the importance of history.

### **Insanity at the Heart of Kurtz's Compound**

When Willard gets to Kurtz's compound he is greeted with a sight of skulls, bones and death, as Willard notes: “Everything I could see showed me he'd gone insane... it smelt

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<sup>107</sup> Pamela Demory, *Apocalypse Now Redux: Heart of Darkness Moves into New Territory*, Literature Film Quarterly, 2007, <http://ehis.ebscohost.com/>, p. 343

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.p.347.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p.346.

<sup>110</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Vintage, 1994, p24.

like slow death. This was the end of the river alright.”<sup>111</sup> The scene is one that is laced with references to literature; the camera shows two books Kurtz is reading, *The Golden Bough* by Sir James George Frazer and *From Ritual to Romance* by Jessie L. Weston. Both books are about the early mythology, primitive rituals and the search for God. Kurtz is going back to the roots of civilisation, in an attempt to find a new path for him and his newly founded tribe. The references to literature continue when Kurtz reads T.S Eliot’s poem *The Hollow Men* to Willard, to convey the deep hollowness and desolation he feels. It is also a connection to *Heart of Darkness*, as Eliot makes a reference to it in the poem, when he writes, “Mistah Kurtz—he dead.”<sup>112</sup> Eliot also refers to Conrad and *Heart of Darkness* in *The Wasteland* with the line: “Looking into the heart of light, the silence”. Kurtz now sees himself as a person without meaning, without emotion, he is deprived of all feeling and hope which is portrayed in his confession after the reading. Kurtz confesses:

I’ve seen horrors . . . horrors that you’ve seen. But you have no right to call me a murderer. You have a right to kill me. You have a right to do that . . . but you have no right to judge me. It is impossible for words to describe what is necessary to those who do not know what horror means. Horror. Horror has a face... and you must make a friend of horror. Horror and moral terror are your friends. If they are not then they are enemies to be feared. They are truly enemies. I remember when I was with Special Forces. Seems a thousand centuries ago. We went into a camp to inoculate the children. We left the camp after we had inoculated the children for polio, and this old man came running after us and he was crying. He couldn’t see. We went back there and they had come and... hacked off every inoculated arm. There they were in a pile. A pile of little arms. And I remember ...I ... I cried. I wept like some

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<sup>111</sup> Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, (dir. Carmine Coppola), 2001.

<sup>112</sup> T.S Eliot, *The Hollow Men*, 1925.

grandmother. I wanted to tear my teeth out. I didn't know what I wanted to do. And I want to remember it. I never want to forget it. I never want to forget. And then I realized... like I was shot... like I was shot with a diamond... a diamond bullet right through my forehead. And I thought: My God... the genius of that. The genius. The will to do that. Perfect, genuine, complete, crystalline, pure. And then I realized they were stronger than we. Because they could stand that... these were not monsters. These were men ... trained cadres. These men who fought with their hearts, who had families, who had children, who were filled with love... but they had the strength... the strength... to do that. If I had ten divisions of those men our troubles here would be over very quickly. You have to have men who are moral... and at the same time who are able to utilize their primordial instincts... to kill without feeling... without passion... without judgement... without judgement. For it is judgement that defeats us.<sup>113</sup>

This passage is very important as it demonstrates Kurtz's understanding and admiration for brutality in human nature. Kurtz suggest that to remove all sense of morals responsibility from a person gives that person strength, as only traditional morals are holding them back from their true potential. Kurtz considers that a division of men, like those who chopped of the arms of children, would end this war very quickly, thus to hold to no ethical or moral values gives power. Kurtz's theory could be compared to that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who hypothesises that to create what he calls the, "divine connection between men and nature"<sup>114</sup>, which he calls intuition. In order to achieve this, the subject must sacrifice humanity and sympathy.<sup>115</sup> Kurtz is also giving Willard a mission, to kill him without

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<sup>113</sup> Marguerite Valentine, 'Death's Dream Kingdom': *The Representation of the Unconscious In Apocalypse Now*, British Journal of Psychotherapy, 2010, pp. 353-4

<sup>114</sup> Katrin Shams- Eddien, *American Myths in Apocalypse Now*, GRIN Verlag, 2003, p10.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid, p10.

judgement, which contrasts sharply with the original mission to kill with “extreme prejudice”<sup>116</sup> command. In order to achieve this, Willard finds his “primordial instincts” by transforming himself into “savage”, covering himself with muck and using a machete to kill Kurtz. Transforming him into a vision of history, but also resorting to instinct, like an animal, this is shown in the double over shot of Kurtz and the animal being executed. Kurtz’s death is ceremonial or like a sacrifice, Willard reflects “even the jungle wanted him dead”<sup>117</sup>. Willard reaches his “breaking point”<sup>118</sup>, that according to Colonel Lucus every man has. Everything that he has seen in Vietnam along with Kurtz words have brought Willard back to the level of a savage or animal instinct.

In Conclusion, *Apocalypse Now* has an underlying anti-war message throughout the film. The imperialist ideology and the insanity of both Willard and Kurtz are two key points in the film as they suggest the insanity war can bring and the repetition of war through the ideology of imperialism. *Apocalypse Now* was a very important movie in American culture, as it was among the first movies to convey a clear anti-war message, Jeanine Basinger refers to a progression of war films in her book, *The World War 2 Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre*, she says,

“From its beginnings through the 1960s, the combat film was explicitly ideological: its purpose was to assert American military and moral superiority. In the 1960s and '70s, a number of anti-war films began to appear that questioned these assumptions.”<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*, Paramount Home Entertainment, 1979.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre*, Columbia UP, 1986, p201.

The 60's and 70's were the start of movies being more critical of the military, and the involvement in Vietnam was particularly scrutinised. The movie industry was becoming the most prominent medium of art, and the most powerful one to shape public opinion. It had a much wider audience than books and because of its reproductive nature was widely available to the public. Gene M. Moore argues that the film industry gives new meaning to any art form, therefore Conrad's message from *Heart of Darkness*, takes on a different form in *Apocalypse Now*, he argues:

“We live in an age in which film has replaced literature as the main channel through which cultural values are transmitted, process of cultural transmission... deserve attention from those concerned with what happens to Conrad's message as it undergoes transformation into other media.”<sup>120</sup>

Conrad's message about Imperialism is rejuvenated in *Apocalypse Now*, and connotes a new message to another generation. The connection between *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* encourages the audience to get a better knowledge of the history of imperialism and through this new possibilities for the future can be made possible.

Willard's descent into madness is created by the horror of the war and the lack of meaning he finds for this horror. In Quart and Auster's *American Film and Society*, they question the implications of many Vietnam movies by arguing that internal psychology is the reason for this horror, and not external forces, they write:

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<sup>120</sup> Gene E. Moore, *Conrad on Film*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p1.

“the particular historical and social reality of the Vietnam War and the Americans war there is replaced by a vaporous notions of civilizations madness. The terror is universalised – it is seen as part of the human condition, not as a product of concrete political forces.”<sup>121</sup>

They suggest that in the film the conflict is put down to the human condition, not “internal psychology”, that it is humanity which creates war and not political forces. This is a very good point, and is one of the major aspects of the film. However, there are references to the politics as well. There is certainly evidence of the corruption of human nature, as is evident in Conrad’s novel, but Willard is shown to be also following orders, in being told the mission, “does not exist, nor will it ever exist”<sup>122</sup>, he is being forced by higher powers to keep the mission secret. The fact that they want Kurtz dead after such a prestigious career shows an irony in how those in power treat their subordinates. Kurtz is deemed insane, but Willard wonders whether Kilgore too is not insane. Willard is driven insane by the contrasting orders from his authorities from Colonel Lucus to kill with “extreme prejudice”<sup>123</sup> and from Kurtz to kill “without judgement.”<sup>124</sup> Willard is torn between the two of these, thus creating the internal conflict that drives him insane. This is how Imperialism and insanity are treated in Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*.

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<sup>121</sup> Leonard Quart and Albert Auster, *American Film and Society: Since 1945*, ABC-CLIO, 2011, p124.

<sup>122</sup> Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*, Paramount Home Entertainment, 1979.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

The studies of the dissertation and events that are subsequent the Vietnam War proves that war is going to continue. From the early stages of modernity we can see that imperialism left a bloody path for the history that followed it. The tension between countries, for land, wealth and power still exist today, not quite in the same form as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but they no doubt still exist. Empires created by tyrant such as King Leopold were not only cruel, subordinating towards the natives and inhumane. As Marlow discovers in *Heart of Darkness*, there is no escape from the system of imperialism, because its rewards and benefit are too great for countries to pass up. Thus Imperialism was not something that was going to fade away, but only consolidate. Marlow can see no alternative to imperialism and as Hanna Arendt said, Marlow cannot help but serve the system, as it is all he knows. He will think of himself as a mere function, and will eventually consider such functionality to be his highest possible achievement.<sup>125</sup> Exploring is all Marlow has ever known, and since his childhood he has dreamed of being an explorer. Now that the dream is complete he cannot turn from it, as he wants to be remember like other great British explores, such as Sir John Franklin.<sup>126</sup> Marlow is disheartened by his ineluctable position by the end of the novel, and the darkness portrayed in both in both Africa and Britain, may indicate the parallels in

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<sup>125</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, Chatto & Windus Ltd., 1994, p27.

<sup>126</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, W.W Norton & Company Ltd., 1991, p.4.



Britain and Africa in terms of their “savagery”. Perhaps it also Marlow’s inability to escape from imperialism as it is the darkness that covers the world.

Edward Said wrote that imperialism would only consolidate over time, and that these imperialist powers were established around World War 2.<sup>127</sup> Although there was no fighting over colonies, there was the German expansion to the east that started off the war and the Soviet Union expansion prior to the war that established them as a super power. World War 2 was a bloody affair, with artillery and airplanes being the focal point of attack cities could be reduced to rubble. Billy Pilgrim witnessed such a catastrophe in Dresden, which left him psychologically scared. *Slaughterhouse 5* deals with the role of propaganda in popular culture as a means of continuing war. Kurt Vonnegut sees movies with cult heroes like John Wayne and Frank Sinatra as polluting the minds of the public into think war is a heroic adventure that all men should partake in. These movies encourage war to generations of the present and future and convey a glamorous sense in war. Mary O’ Hare mentions this point, as most of the people who fought in wars were only young boys rather than men. By depicting war as an adventurous and that it consists of bravery and honour, gives the impression to young boys that by going to war they will become a man. Vonnegut wanted to recreate a vivid vision of World War 2 in its horrific form, so that the reader would see that war is horrible, in order to stop future generations fighting in war for these false ideals. Vonnegut argued that we must stop being passive about war, as the Tralfamadorian ideology proposes, and become more critical and objectionable of future wars in order to stop them.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p.426.

The movies which glorified contrast to *Full Metal Jacket* and *Apocalypse Now* as both movies give an accurate account of the Vietnam War itself, but also convey an anti-war message. In *Full Metal Jacket* the duality of man is discussed, which is their ability to do both good and bad. This theory by Carl Jung is tested out in the boot camp scene demonstrates the different reactions of two soldiers to the harsh conditioning they receive for Sargent Hartman. Private Pyle goes insane after the training and kills both his Sargent and himself. Stanley Kubrick devises a movie that does not follow the glorification of war that World War two movies do. The link of popular culture is also mentioned *Full Metal Jacket* as there are many references to John Wayne and Joker and his friend Cowboy suggest plating cowboys and Indians with the Vietnamese. *Full Metal Jacket* illustrates American history and popular culture playing a huge role in the Vietnam effort. Kubrick in response to this makes a balanced movie that shows no real side or opinion on the war. Although it is shot from an American perspective, internal dialogue from the Joker is minimal, so we get little of what he thinks about the war. In doing this we get a more panoramic vision of the war, as the American soldiers all have different opinions on Vietnam, and why America is involved in Vietnam. The military unit give these opinions while being interview by a cameraman. The level of media coverage in the Vietnam War was unparalleled with any war that preceded it. The media itself was used as a tool to divide opinion, as many journalist like Michael Herr, were writing from experiences within the American army. Along with these first-hand accounts there was also journalist who tried to cover up the problems in Vietnam, a good example being the battle for Khe Sanh, which Michael Herr writes in his book *Dispatches*. Khe Sanh was a relatively unimportant base in Vietnam that had no real strategic gain. However, the Americans got could up in a battle that lasted over 40 days, and the media portrayed it as I vital victory for America, although it was basically in significant. Michael

Herr writes: "A great many people wanted to know how the Khe Sanh Combat base could have been the western anchor to our defence one month and a worthless piece of ground the next"<sup>128</sup> In its treatment of the media *Full Metal Jacket* underlines how there were two sides to the media, and this ultimately cause many perspectives on the Vietnam War. Kubrick's film offers a very accurate account of the war itself, and also links American history and popular culture to the war in Vietnam. Kubrick possibly thinks that accuracy is the important message to convey, rather than the fiction of movies that preceded it.

*Apocalypse Now* links imperialism with the Vietnam War through various parallels with *Heart of Darkness*. The French Plantation scene in *Apocalypse Now Redux* was Coppola's best link to imperialism, as not only does it symbolises the abandoned outpost Marlow stumbles upon, but the presence of the French remind the cinema audience that Vietnam was originally a French colony. This makes a connection between the old imperialism of France, with the new imperialism of America in their involvement in Vietnam. America's history is also referenced in *Apocalypse Now* as *Flight of the Valkyries* by Wagner, may also remind people of G. W. Griffith's movie *Birth of a Nation*. This movie is a bias account of the American Civil War, so the song may be a trigger for patriotism and glory. The ultimate question in *Apocalypse Now* is on the aesthetics of war whether war can ever have a meaning or justification. Kurtz contemplates this when coming to the conclusion that men without morals are strong. Kurtz may be making a link to imperialism here, as in order to have power, or conquer, you must take away all feeling from killing people, and as he puts it kill "without judgement."<sup>129</sup> In order to this the subject must be completely dehumanised like in the case of imperialist to the Africans. Throughout history

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<sup>128</sup> Michael Herr, *Dispatches*, Pan Books, 1978, p.133.

<sup>129</sup> Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*, Paramount Home Entertainment, 1979.

dehumanisation has been a method of gaining a psychological advantage over your opponent and a manipulation to make one group feel superior to another. This can be seen in all the works discussed whether it be the Africans in *Heart of Darkness*, the American's in *Slaughterhouse 5*, or the Vietnamese in the two film, they are dehumanised to make killing them easier. This achieved through propaganda and the indoctrination training that each soldier goes through.

So to answer the overriding question if This is the End? Has the apocalypse already begun in the sense that we are caught in a cycle of unending war? With the development of weapons to such a large scale, an apocalypse is certainly possible, and events like the Cuban Missile Crisis made this a real possibility. The possibility is of an apocalypse is dealt in Alan Moore's *The Watchmen*, where the character the Comedian summarises:

"Yeah, but it takes a room full of morons to think they're small enough for you to handle. You know, mankind's been trying to kill each other off since the beginning of time; now, we finally have the power to finish the job. Ain't nothing gonna matter once those nukes start flying; we'll all be dust. [sets light to a display of the United States.] And Ozymandias here will be the smartest man on the cinder."<sup>130</sup>

The Comedian points out that since the beginning of time war has existed and men have been killing each other. Now we have weapons sufficient enough to destroy the world, courtesy of the billions of dollars, in America's case, a year that are spent on weapons development. Although nuclear is a possibility, the end of the world is not something this dissertation was aimed at calculating, the argument was whether an apocalypse can be said to have begun, due to an endless cycle of war. Imperialism still exists today, in the form of

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<sup>130</sup> Zack Snyder's film adaptation of Alan Moore's *The Watchmen*, 2009.

invading countries for their natural resources continues. America's pursuit of oil in the Middle East is an example of this imperialism and the fact that they are not the only country still guilty of imperialism suggests that it is still alive. Noam Chomsky had the following to say on American's foreign policy in the Middle East:<sup>131</sup>

"Given U.S. control over Western Hemisphere resources, the United States thus effectively controlled the major energy reserves of the noncommunist world, with all that implied with regard to the organization of international society.<sup>2</sup> A number of years later, the American position in the Middle East was extended. Following the CIA-backed coup in Iran in 1953, American oil companies controlled 40% of Iranian oil. By the mid 50's, American dominance of the region and total dominance of Saudi Arabia was virtually complete."

The U.S control over The Middle East's natural resources emphasizes that imperialism in the term of one country invading another country for it own benefit still exist today. So to answer the question if the end has already begun, it is a question that a definitive answer cannot be given, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that war is a continuous and repetitive cycle. With mediums like propaganda people can be manipulated into thinking a certain war is necessary. With the development of war it is also possible to destruction in also on an unprecedented scale, and there is no lack of funds towards countries defence budgets. So the aim of this dissertation was to find the links between different wars and explore the factors that cause the continuity of war. Areas such as propaganda, certain areas of popular culture, history, land, money, power and many other factors attribute to war. Finally war is certainly continuing for the time being, but recent studies have shown that the earth is in its most peaceful era, according to Steven Pinker, he writes: "The decline

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<sup>131</sup> Oil Imperialism and the US-Israel Relationship Noam Chomsky interviewed by Roger Hurwitz, David Woolf & Sherman Teichman Leviathan, 1:1-3, Spring, 1977, pp. 6-9, 86 [March, 1977]

of violence may be the most significant and least appreciated development in the history of our species."<sup>132</sup> So there are shades of optimism, although war is on-going, there is a possibility it is slowly decelerating. But, for the moment war is sustainable and the old ideology of imperialism still exists today, just in a different form.

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<sup>132</sup> Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature*,  
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