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Original Paper

Apocalypse Now Final Cut: The French Plantation Is Back. Vive le Cinéma!

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Abstract

The paper analyzes the recovery of the French Plantation sequence in the films Apocalypse Now, Final Cut, and Coppola, recovering the movie's entire narrative and aesthetic capacity. We demonstrate how Coppola, obeying distribution norms and standard marketing devices, suppresses the sequence, producing a film like all the others. Coppola recovered the narrative of the French Plantation in dialogue with Schoendoerffer's nostalgic cinema, masterfully adapting Conrad's work, Heart of Darkness. The description of the French and American wars in the paper provides the background, allowing us to understand why there is a French plantation in Vietnam and why the United States entered the conflict in Southeast Asia. The recovery of the sequence describes French colonization in the era of imperialism, producing commodities such as rubber in plantations—places where the planters put down their roots—the plantation becomes property, existential justification, homeland, and source of memory. Defeated in Dien Bien Phu, the French do not abandon Vietnam and their memories, transforming them into nostalgic ghosts shrouded in the mists of history. The French Plantation restored in Apocalypse Now, Final Cut, gives the film the status of a work of art, ceasing to be a confusing work about an absurd and unfortunate war.

Keywords

cinema, literature, Vietnam wars, Cold War, plantations, nostalgia, memory, technology

"The Indochina War was a war of independence against France, and if the combat tool was forged using Marxist methods, it remains no less true that the Viet Minh soldier who rose, and with what courage, to the assault on our positions at Dien Bien Phu, fought to throw us out of his home where we were not at home." (General Pierre Langlais, 1963)

"Was the perfect rehearsal for our war with the Americans. All the commanders of our Corps and Divisions during the US War had served at Dien Bien Phu." Vietnam People Army, North Vietnamese Army, Colonel Bui Tin (Howard Simpson, 1994).

1. Introduction

Did the lack of enlightenment of the United States of America regarding millennial Vietnam, the French colonization, and the war that France fought in Indochina provoke the unfortunate American intervention in Southeast Asia? The hubris that inoculated American politics and military planners appears during dinner at the French Plantation Sequence, when the character Lafavre, with contained irritation, asks Captain Willard: "Do you know anything about Dien Bien Phu?" The American carelessly answers, "Yeah, I know." And Lafavre retorts, "No, you do not. Not really." (Screenplay) The ignorance of Dien Bien is a metaphor for willful ignorance, disregarding voluntary naïveté, the rawness of millinery Vietnam, modern French colonization, and the French war — factors at the origin of the tragedy of the American intervention.

The Plantation was a large agricultural property used by the French colonizers, producing rubber on a large scale for European and American industries. The main character in Kubrick's film *Apocalypse. Now*, Captain Willard, is tasked to kill Colonel Kurtz, an uncontrollable and dangerous soldier who has taken refuge deep in the jungle and reigns supreme over the Montagnard inhabitants. Willard's PB, sailing down the muddy river, finds a ghostly structure that has emerged in the middle of nowhere, the French Plantation. There, he is received by the French planter owner, Hubert De Marais, along with his family and personal guard.

At the dinner hosted by the owner, the dominant topic was the imperial role of France in Indochina and the omnipresent war. The beautiful French female character, Roxanne, is a widow and, when talking to Captain Willard, refers to her husband as if he had died in the war while referring to her fleeting American lover as *soldat perdu*. (Screenplay) Coppola's camera presents the plantation residents as paternalistic, greedy, unyielding, arrogant, conservative, and combative. After the defeat of France in 1954, the few remaining planters were threatened by the Viet Cong with losing their plantations. Living under the sword of Damocles, they find refuge in nostalgia, in accordance with the notion of individual and collective memory in Halbwachs and Lowenthal.

For Captain Benjamin Willard, the French Plantation is the whaler *Rachel* who, in Herman Melville's immortal novel, informs Captain Ahab, commander of the *Pequod*, of the whereabouts of Moby Dick. It is at the Plantation where he learns of the whereabouts of his white whale, the crazed military outcast. The young Captain crosses puberty into adulthood, undergoing the ultimate test, meeting Colonel Kurtz, whom he murders in a ritual in which blood plays a key role. Coppola is a filmmaker of exceptional quality whose training has enabled him to effectively interact with European and Asian films that have broadened his professional knowledge. *Apocalypse Now* originally included the French Plantation, which shed light on the American presence in Southeast Asia. It was a long, sophisticated film. The

elimination of the sequence was due to marketing criteria: *Apocalypse Now Redux*, a common film, as "all films are." Similar to the American intervention in Vietnam, it became a tortuous, confusing, and meaningless film.

Our essay explains the American War by recovering a regime of history, according to François Hartog. (2017*) Apocalypse Now Redux*, as a film, narrates the American Vietnam War as a presentist regime outside of history, a present outside of time. Our article recovers the regime of history and memory from the Cold War, the anti-colonial liberation movements, the French colonial war, and the historical concepts of memory and heritage. Our essay is a "tool for creating this distance, to have a finer understanding at the end of the process of what is close by." Thus, French Plantation recovers its discursive meaning of telling the cinematic narrative that is the Final Cut.

2. The Meaning of the Colony

The war waged by France in Indochina between 1945-1954 ensured possession of its exploration colony conquered in 1887. General De Gaulle was nurtured in France, a phoenix rising from the ashes of WW2, and the illusion of being a great world power on the maps. The colonial explorations sold commodities, keeping their owners rich and powerful.

These, after the defeat in Dien Bien Phu, were threatened with losing their Plantations and were shaken economically and emotionally. They suffered from nostalgia—the loss of a place that was not their birthplace but a borrowed homeland. Leaving it was a painful and painful exile, as the writer and veteran soldier of Indochina, Hélie de Saint-Marc, explains: "Leaving Vietnam was a wrench. I felt like the heir of an invisible line. " Since 1954, I have always felt that I am living in exile, far from a country where I am not." (Thévenet, 2001)

2.1 The Cold War

The conflict, which began after 1945, divided the world into two heterogeneous blocs. The first, led by the USSR, exported forms of Marxism-Leninism. The second, led by the USA, supported capitalism and the market economy and was hostile to protectionist nationalism. Both had nuclear arsenals, making the specter of total war an unthinkable hypothesis, preferring to fight localized wars. (Service, 2015)

Odd Westad believes that the Cold War pitted two irreducible systems against each other. One was irremediably good, and the other inexorably bad. Both systems wanted to build the future. Localized regional conflicts after 1945 became wars of independence. During the Korean War, the United States used its growing military strength to counter the Soviets and Chinese. When the defeated France evacuated Vietnam in 1954, the United States took its place, transforming South Vietnam into its stronghold and escalating the conflict. (Westad, 2015)

2.2 The French War

The French War in Indochina was fought far from metropolitan France. In the theaters of operations, in the jungles, mountains, marshes, and rice fields, the soldiers felt isolated, distant, and forgotten.

(Thévenet,2001) In the early years, the French army, humiliated by the defeat of 1940, believed in a military victory. From the beginning, the war in Indochina disturbed and subverted Western logic. An armored column commanded by Colonel Beaufré triumphantly entered the small town of Cao Bang, on the border with China, at the end of 1947. One of its members reported that it advanced easily without firing a single shot. However, "the invisible enemy was present everywhere. Hidden, it manifested itself in the destruction that was being carried out." The officer, still tense, added: "We did not see a single enemy, not even a single inhabitant." (Bodard, 1997)

3. Asia after 1945

In 1945, France sent troops to fight Japan, but Emperor Showa surrendered before they reached their destination. According to the provisions of the Treaty of Potsdam, Japanese troops in the south of the peninsula would lay down their arms to the British in Saigon. In Tonkin, to the north, the Chinese nationalists of Chiang Kai Tschek would accept the Japanese surrender. On the day of the Japanese capitulation, September 2, 1945, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed the country's independence in Hanoi. Supported by the American OSS, he took advantage of the power vacuum resulting from the Japanese setback and the absence of the French.

When the Chinese nationalists occupied Tonkin and accepted the Japanese surrender, Ho Chi Minh became fearful of neighboring China, Vietnam's traditional rival. For this reason, he did not oppose the French landing in force in Haiphong, which forced the Chinese to withdraw. The leader preferred to fight the Europeans rather than the Republic of China. After intense negotiations between France and Ho Chi Minh, dramatically antagonistic interests led to the breakdown of negotiations in 1946. A long conflict began, which only ended in 1954, with the French defeat, the Geneva Agreements, and a divided country. (Ruscio, 1987)

3.1 A war of Professionals and not of Conscripts

The French army employed only professional soldiers in Indochina, while America employed draftees. After 1945, France was struggling with a high unemployment rate, and military careers in the exotic East attracted young civilians. For the French military, the colonial conflict represented high salaries, quick promotions, and the possibility of victory. Dying in the colonial war, as the title of Lieutenant Colonel Michel Goya's book suggests, was, for these professionals, a "working hypothesis." (Goya, 2014) The successive engagements in Indochina demonstrate that many men did not want to lose their place in the troops, the camaraderie, the gains, and the adventure. (Boudin, 1997)

As part of the CEFEO, or French Expeditionary Corps of the Far East, French officers and sergeants were less than ¼ of the total. They included Moroccan, Tunisian, and Algerian troops, whose repatriated members rose against France. (Simpson, 1996) The American troops totaled half a million soldiers fighting only in South Vietnam and part of Cambodia.

The CEFEO spread throughout Indochina, including Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. They guarded the posts and were concentrated in the offensive shock troops called Groupes Mobiles, or Combat Teams.

The troops of the prestigious BPC, or colonial paratrooper battalions, were composed of half-European volunteers and half-Vietnamese. Unlike the Americans, the French fought alongside the Vietnamese.

The majority of French officers who graduated from the Saint-Cyr-Coetquidan military academy served voluntarily in Indochina. The alarming number of deaths in Southwest Asia made it difficult to form NATO divisions. Many sons of traditional military families, imbued with the spirit of caste, died in combat. Despite the Marshall Plan, the war in Indochina drained resources from the French economy in the post-war period. The country's largest volume of military investment went to equip NATO-type divisions. Reduced or obsolete weapons were sent to the CEFEO in Indochina. The donations from the USA were fundamental, consisting of attack and transport aircraft, armored vehicles, artillery, parachutes, financial resources, and fuel.

3.2 Could the Colonial War Have Been Avoided?

According to Ngoei, in 1941, the speed with which Japan conquered the European colonies in Asia suggested to Western observers the fall of dominoes falling one after the other. (Win-Qing, 2017)

General Eisenhower's presidential speech in April 1954 updated the theory: "Finally, you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the 'falling domino' principle. You have a row of dominoes set up; you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over rapidly. So you could have the beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences".

The Japanese conquest suppressed the colonial administrations, allowing the emergence of nationalist movements. (Franchini, 2011) These would be fought in the bipolar world of the Cold War, since the American government was concerned about communist hegemony in these national liberation movements. Washington reluctantly supported France's return to Indochina and favored the independence of Indonesia, a Dutch colony led by the anti-communist Muslim Ahmed Sukarno. According to Biarritz, these realities demonstrated that "America has decided that anti-Communism is more important than anti-colonialism" (Barritz, 1985)

3.3 The Reconquest Was an Adventure until 1949

The French reconquest initially employed veteran troops from World War II. They were commanded by General Leclerc, who, negotiating with Ho Chi Minh in 1946, considered the war unwinnable. He suggested to De Gaulle that he consider the possibility of Vietnam's independence. (Thévenet,2001) His local superior, Admiral Thierry D'Argenlieu, a Benedictine and Catholic monk who supported recolonization, broke with Ho Chi Minh in 1949. French authorities refused to grant the country independence, transforming it into an "associated state," making the mellifluous Emperor Bao Dai the head of the Indochinese state.

With this diplomatic device, the fight to recolonize ceased to be a colonial reconquest and became a war against the Viet Minh. French colonialist designs were accommodated to the anti-communism prevailing in American foreign policy. To mollified, liberal public opinion in the United States, in the bipolar context of the Cold War, the Americans sent the French to Indochina with abundant material.

(Franchini, 2011) In 1950, the Truman administration supported the war with 10 million dollars. (Biarritz)

At the beginning of French military operations, the distant war suggested the illusion of victory. The guerrillas remained nucleated in their forest sanctuary until, in 1949, the Indochinese conflict changed drastically. Mao Zedong's victory in the civil war brought communist China to a border with Indochina. The Communist army armed and trained the regular divisions of the Vietminh, the future army of the VPA, providing an incessant flow of war material. In 1950, the outbreak of the Korean War suggested that the West faced communism on two Asian fronts "closely alike." (Barritz, 1985)

General Giap carried out a counteroffensive, capturing the untenable citadels of Cao Bang and Lang Son and annihilating 4,000 French soldiers during his disastrous retreat. (Bodard, 1987) Faced with the threat of losing Tonkin, the French government appointed the prestigious General de Lattre de Tassigny as commander of the CEFEO. Brilliant and theatrical, he re-established the situation, galvanized the troops, and regained the initiative. General Giap described him as a brilliant professional soldier. (Darcourt,1965)

4. Plan Navarre

After the armistice negotiations in Korea, France isolated and left Indochina. On June 26, 1953, French Prime Minister Joseph Laniel declared to the country that "his government would search tirelessly for an end to the conflict, whether that would be during the negotiations that followed the signing of an armistice in Korea or any other negotiations taken in agreement with the Associated States [of Indochina]." (Holcombe, 2020) Before the negotiations, the French government entrusted the command of the CEFEO to General Henri Navarre, ordering him to find an honorable solution to the conflict. The military man outlined Plan Navarre, denounced by Ho Chi Minh and Giap as an American project ignoring peace discussions. They wanted a military victory, ordering the people and the army to ignore news about the Geneva Conference, continuing the war without relenting. (Holcombe, 2020)

The Navarre Plan defeated the Vietminh in previous battles by using its alleged firepower superiority, allowing it to sit down at the negotiating table under favorable conditions. Navarre concentrated his forces, but his skilled opponent forced him to disperse them (Giap, 1961). Simultaneously, the French successfully defended the Na San air base, confirming the prevailing doctrine that a fortified position supplied by an air bridge would win as long as it was defended by artillery and fighter aircraft.

Fearing the invasion of Laos by the VPA, Navarre, in a controversial decision, launched Operation Castor on November 22–23 (the Greek god, not the hard-working little animal). He occupied Dien Bien Phu with six paratrooper battalions, operating deep behind enemy lines. Dien Bien Phu, like Na San, would be supplied by aviation and artillery. The French newspaper L'Aurore announced: "A new blow from Navarre against the Viets: thousands of paratroopers seize Dien Bien Phu, in Thai country, 290 km from Hanoi." (L'Aurore, 1953). Vice-President Richard Nixon visited Den Bien during an Asian tour, believing in French success: "A French withdrawal from Vietnam would have laced us into

complicated options because American policy was predicated upon the vital importance of maintaining an independent Vietnam." (Baritz, 1985) Senator John Kennedy was against military aid to France. Knowing that the Vietminh had strong popular support, he believed the French staying would result in Ho Chi Minh's victory.

4.1 Giap's Plan

The Navarre plan failed because it needed to consider the enormous distance of Dien Bien Phu from the French centers. It was hampered by occupying the valley floor, leaving the high ground in Giap's hands. The French military doubted that Vietminh logistics could sustain a battle 500 km from their bases. They were mistaken because Giap exploited "the most vulnerable point of the enemy, their vitality, and their transport," blocking the airstrip from the beginning by bombing and using the DCA. (Giap, 1961)

For Giap, this was a people's war, and to wage it, he would mobilize "all possible means, modern or rudimentary, for transporting life and ammunition. The truck convoys use their maximum capacity to roll high-speed vehicles for entire nights, taking advantage of the cover for daily use." (Giap, 1999).

The battle corps, covered by the masterful camouflage system, had five divisions, including the 351st heavy division, "with the engineer, ground-to-ground, and anti-aircraft artillery regiments." (Chemins de Mémoire)

The French, belatedly informed that the PRC had supplied the VPA with abundant heavy artillery and ample ammunition, sent a report to General Cogny, commander of Tonkin: "The Vietminh artillery is as numerous as ours, and its observation is better." Cogny added at the bottom of the page, "Why didn't you inform me before?" (Fall, 2002). American observers warned of the risk of artillery hidden in the terrain, as had happened in Korea, becoming immune to counter-battery fire and invisible to French aviation. (Bearden, 2015) For Major General Do Tat Chuan of the VPA, the attack on the entrenched camp employed a "strong artillery corps, employing this force in a concentrated manner, and creating superiority in operations." (Chuan, 2024)

The Vietminh encirclement prevented the garrison from being evacuated by land, including patrolling the surrounding area. At 5:00 p.m. on March 13, a Vietminh bombardment rendered the airstrip useless. Thousands of wounded remained in makeshift shelters until the end of the battle. At dawn on the first day of the attack, the Beatrice forward position succumbed after furious fighting. The French command and US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles accused China of fighting alongside the Vietminh. (L'Anglais, 1963) It was later learned that many Chinese had done so. (Simpson, 1996)

As the peripheral positions fell one after the other, panic gripped the French and American military. General Ely, the French Chief of Staff, American Admiral Radford, and President Eisenhower planned Operation Vulture (Vautour) with American air forces in the Asia-Pacific, bombing Vietminh positions with atom bombs. US Senator Stennis, interviewed on May 13, 1954, for the communist newspaper L'Humanité, stated: "It would be the 'the first bullets of the third world war". (L'Humanité, 1954)

President Eisenhower rejected Operation Vautour, avoiding angering China, knowing that the American people were tired of wars. (Ruscio, 1987)

4.2 The Painful and Glorious Outcome

Dien Bien Phu, besieged by the Viet Minh DCA, saw its parachute supply reduced as the French perimeter narrowed. The jump of battalions such as Bigeard's 6th BPC allowed some counterattacks. Soldiers destined for replacement, as Pierre Schoendoerffer wrote, without any training, jumped at night, "on the battlefield, in the barbed wire, in the entrenched camp, in the middle of holes, arms, even mines." (Jaud, 2022) In every respect, this French defeat, a victory for the Vietnamese People's Army, was also a human epic on both sides.

After 56 days of fighting, at 5:00 p.m. on May 7, Dien Bien Phu succumbed. (Langlais, 1963) Of the 13,000 French soldiers captured, 3,000 returned. (Hunt, 2020) Perhaps that is why, during dinner at the French Plantation, the character Lafravre asks Willard: "Do you know anything about Dien Bien Phu?" Moreover, the American replies, "Yeah, I know." And Lafavre retorts, "No, you do not. Not really." (Screenplay)

The peace Agreements concluded in Geneva determined that the French army would evacuate Tonkin.

The Franco-Vietnamese troops, exposed to reprisals from the PVA, embarked for the south, along with thousands of anti-communist and Catholic refugees. In Hanoi, regulated by the teams of the Armistice Commission, French troops crossed paths with communist soldiers occupying barracks, government offices, and services. They then gathered in Haifong, setting sail for France on May 19, 1955. (Le Monde, 1954)

5. What Is a Plantation, and Why Is It French

The third industrial revolution consolidated modernity with the internal combustion engine, the automobile, fossil fuels, electricity, and the chemical industry, leading the world market to consume new colonial commodities such as rubber. (Tully, 2011)

In French Indochina, industries, subsidiaries, distilleries, mining and weaving emerged. (Aso, 2009) Moreover, the colonial economic reorganization altered traditional lifestyles and values, creating a new social hierarchy. (Bayly, 2009) Since 1927, the growing production of rubber helped to develop an Indochinese national identity, "as a rubber-producing colony became, during the process of decolonization, an important part of a Vietnamese national identity." (Anderson, 2002). After unification in 1975, the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) recognized the economic benefits to its country of supplying rubber to world markets.

5.1 An Actual French Plantation: Howard Simpson Testimony

During the French War, plantations were legitimate targets of the Viet Minh. American diplomat and writer Howard Simpson visited one of them during French military operations. He described the plantation zone as "an eerie expanse of flatland covered by mile upon mile of rubber trees planted in endless rows… the wide lanes between the rubber trees stretched on into infinity." After an exchange of

fire with the Viet Minh, the French captain, who commanded a North African troop, invited him to visit the plantation, where the owner would receive them for lunch.

Simpson had the same vision as Willard at the French Plantation. He noted that the main building "was guarded by a sinister-locking band of armed irregulars, wearing black blouses and trousers resembling pajamas. For a few seconds, I thought they were driving directly into a Viet Minh ambush. However, the captain greeted their leader." He noted that they were darker-skinned men than the Vietnamese and that they were using different weapons. The captain "explained that the irregulars at the gate belonged to the private army of the plantation manager." These were Cambodian mercenaries from the border, fighting "Vietminh infiltration of the plantation." Simpson, the French officer, and the owner went to a "fairy, fan-cooled dining room where the table was lit with silver and crystal." Howard was hungry. "We ate our way through deviled crab baked in its shell, beef and sautéed potatoes, salad and cheese, and a delicious crème caramel. We drank a Corsican vin rosé and finished the meal with cognac and short Dutch cigars."

The atmosphere described by Simpson is reminiscent of the dinner given by Hubert de Marais to Willard. The hospitality "was a dreamlike quality to this interlude. The plantation seemed like an oasis in the middle of a hostile environment. The shuffle of the silent servants, the buzz of the fans, and the occasional whistles from the parrot created a false sense of security. It was challenging to imagine that the ranks of distant rubber trees constituted a battle zone." After the meal, the owner brought out his arsenal of weapons designed to defend the property and led him to a room that gave off an unpleasant odor. Simpson saw, horrified, that they were coming from "the two dead men lying face down on the mud floor. They were so small that I first thought they must be children." They were two Vietminh couriers carrying mail who were intercepted and shot by Cambodian mercenaries. The sight of a mutilated corpse after a hearty lunch was a shock, demonstrating how brutal this war was. When saying goodbye, Simpson asked the owner why he had treated him with such distant and cold politeness during lunch. The planter bluntly told the Foreign Service officer, "Perhaps you have guessed?" He asked, 'I am sorry, but I detest Americans.'" (Simpson, 1994)

The French captain reported that the owner married a Vietnamese woman whose elderly mother lived on the property. While the family was away, the Vietminh attacked and took over the plantation, killing employees and torturing, raping, and decapitating the owner's mother-in-law, whose head was left on top of a small mound of earth. Assuming that the body was below, when the body dug up, the loose head rolled down the hillside.

When the novelist Jean Lartéguy was in Vietnam in 1965, the remaining French were ambiguous, much like the De Marais. Due to General De Gaulle's political position, the South Vietnamese under Diem and the Americans were suspicious of their sincerity. Most of the French rubber plantations, at the time of the American intervention, were in Viet Cong territory to whom the planters paid tribute, as well as to the Southern government, which, instead of protecting the plantations, left them vulnerable to the communists.

6. The French War and Colonizers' Nostalgia

Nostalgia originates from the Greek word's nostos, a desire to return home, and algia, a painful state caused by the loss or absence of a loved one. Nostalgia as a disease was diagnosed in the 16th century when Swiss mercenary soldiers, fighting far from their homeland, fell ill from longing for their home. The past is a dwelling without a roof or walls, like the memory palace of the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), studied by Francis Yeats and Jonathan Spence. It is associated with language, constituting what Castoriadis calls the "magma of meanings." It is the social imaginary born of history, composed of meanings supported by images or figures. (Castoriades, 1975)

For Lowenthal, no escape from the past makes the present recognizable. For him, North Americans are heirs to the past bequeathed by the founding fathers of the Revolution. The sacred task of children is to "preserve the inheritance that could never match their father's and thus never reap such rewards." Parents will always be remembered for what they did and bequeathed to their children, "who merely kept their legacy. The founders were justly famed; the stewards would be justly forgotten." (Lowenthal, 2015) In the French Plantation sequence, the French residents threatened with losing their paternal inheritance feel pain, not from losing their native country, France. However, as happened with Helié de Saint-Marc, he was in exile in a borrowed country, Vietnam. The settlers refused the adverse present and

returned to the past when the colony was French.

6.1 Plantation: Memory, Nostalgia and Literature

For Světlana Boym, nostalgia is "restorative" and "reflective"; it is a "romance with one's fantasy" (2008). The restoration of origins transforms the "reminiscences and evocations of a past lifestyle and an idealized vision of the intercultural relations within the colony that existed at that time." According to Castoriades, this social imaginary is fed by myths stored and transmitted by memory, embellishing the experiences lived by parents and children. For Lorcin, a "nonexistent dimension of the colonial experience is created. "It is a collective sentiment that remains grounded in personal or familial experience in a way that myth does not." (Lorcin, 2013)

The place of the French Plantation is a double invention. According to Michel de Certeau, it is an art of making: "There is no doubt that a reality is at the origin of this double invention. And it provides fantasy and its object." (Certeau, 1990). In Maurice Halbwachs' concept of memory, the collective memory transmitted by parents involves individual ones without being confused with them. A man can only evoke his past by relying on the memory of others. That is why the family group is vital in collectively narrating and supporting everyone's memories.

In the French Plantation, the spatial image establishes a definitive scenography in the "collective memory." Every aspect, every detail, natural landmark, odor, and flavor of the place is unattainable by outsiders. They are only fully intelligible and meaningful to the members of the group "because all the parts of the space that it occupies correspond to many aspects of the structure of life in their society, rather than to what is most stable in itself." (Halbwachs, 1977)

Colonial nostalgia is present in the literature of French authors such as Marguerite Duras and Jean Larteguy. (Lorcin, 2013). The French novelist Jean Lartéguy (1920–2011) was a soldier and journalist for Paris-Match and the author of more than fifty works written about Indochina and Algeria. For Kathryn Edwards, nostalgia permeates his works such as *Hanoi, ou La Ville étranglée,* and *Le mal Jaune*. They are narratives "about the Vietnamese cities where he lived, Saigon and Hanoi, and describe his love for these cities." Described as "two cities that no longer exist, Hanoi and Saigon," they are captured by their memory and nostalgia, which in reading are diseases: "Those who loved them — and there were many of them - contracted with them an illness (in the original) from which they will never recover" (Edwards, 1962).

7. The American War

Japanese influence in Asia began with the victory over the Russian Empire in 1905, inspiring dreams of independence in the local elites. However, it was the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the creation of communist parties in the 1920s that brought the nationalist libertarian agenda to the masses. For Westheider, American intervention originated in 1944 with the activities of the OSS. The organization, following the guidelines of the Roosevelt administration, supported Asian movements fighting against Japan and European colonizers. (Westheider, 2011)

The Viet Minh, led by Ho Chi Minh and Giap, was communist and nationalist and obtained temporary support from the American OSS for its independence project. The Truman administration diplomatically ignored Ho Chi Minh's demands. The Cold War, the Korean War, and the worldwide confrontation with "communist aggression" led the United States to reluctantly support the French reoccupation of Indochina, which, after Dien Bien Phu in 1954, evacuated Vietnam, according to the Geneva Agreements, divided at the 17th parallel. The communist PVR established itself in the North, supported by the USSR and China. The United States supported the government of the Catholic Mandarin Diem in the South. (Westheider, 2011)

For Farber and Foner (1994), the American intervention in Vietnam coincided with the libertarian expectations of the Age of Great Dreams. President Kennedy's enthusiastic supporters saw the dream of Camelot shattered in 1964 with the assassination in Dallas. The tremendous national aspirations of civil rights success, poverty reduction, the Johnson administration, and the glamorous 1960s were met with crime, drug abuse, violence, corporate corruption, and a deep national malaise resulting from the

7.1 Vietnam War: Insurrectionary and Technological Warfare

In the 1960s, decolonization established insurrectionary warfare as a fighting practice. To confront it, Western armies changed their doctrine, perfecting counterinsurgency techniques. This secondary discipline in military academies temporarily supplanted the usual military practice. Its critics claimed it was inappropriate, and American General Petraeus suggested avoiding it. (Petreus, 1987) The adoption of anti-rebellion warfare in the United States was due to President Kennedy's desire to have an

instrument of political-military action in Southeast Asia. While the USSR and China moved their pawns around the world, using insurgency, America would use counterinsurgency. (Silverstone, 2022)

The American military should study a new form of combat by analyzing the enemy's motivations and informing itself in the abundant theoretical foreign literature. For Vietnam veteran Lieutenant Caputo, these works were the "gospels of Mao Zedong, as devoutly as the Chairman's disciples in Peeking or Hanoi. They were obeying the injunction, 'Knowing your enemy.'" For most officers, the exotic counterinsurgency was decidedly un-American (Caputo, 1978).

The atmosphere of corporate success brought by Secretary of Defense Robert Strange McNamara invaded military cabinets. Aspiring to create a "modern Army" shaped by the influence of the "corporate image of the Ford Motor Company," McNamara transformed US military planners into "team players,' who spoke the glib jargon of public relations and practiced the art of covering their tracks." (Caputo, 1978).

Government officials were unfamiliar with the region. According to General Williams, "Too few Americans knew anything about Vietnam, the country, or its people." (Williams, 1981) This new, popular political war fought on unfamiliar ground diverges from traditional conflict. His dodges and drifts will annihilate the theories from McNamara's business environment. Although correct, the reports and reviews produced by think tanks did not reflect the logic of the art of war. For Williams, "apparent military success could not be translated into political success in the larger war. The United States is so dominated by its technologies and its wealth that it has lost touch with people. The United States believes it can spread democracy and maneuver politics by technology and money only. This may well be a fatal error in the life of our nation." (Williams, 1981)

7.2 Explaining Counterinsurgency

It was born out of the hegemonic desire of the United States to triumph in the Asia-Pacific. In 1949, broad sectors of the United States, including evangelical politicians, lamented the loss of China to the communists. In 1954, the French defeat in Indochina "made for rather unpleasant news in the U.S. about a new type of warfare coming onto the world scene." (Hain, 1999) Paradoxically, insurrectionary and guerrilla warfare were as American as apple pie. Mao Zedong defined an army in insurrectionary struggle in a way that the American patriot from South Carolina, Francis Marion (1732–1795), would support. For Mao Zedong (1893–1976) and Marion, fighting was the duty of citizens. An armed civilian is a soldier: "I am a farmer,' or 'I am a student' 'I can discuss literature but not military arts.' This is incorrect. There is no profound difference between the farmer and the soldier. You must have courage. "When you take your arms in hand, you become soldiers; when you are organized, you become military units" (Zedong, 2017). The Chinese leader considered it essential to unite "the strength of the army with that of the people; we must strike the weak spots in the enemy's flanks, in his front, in this rear. We must make war everywhere and cause dispersal of his forces and dissipation of his strength." (Zedong, 2017) Victorious in conflicts since its independence, the American offensive capacity defeated the Viet Cong in conventional battles. However, "the Vietnam experience was a

bewildering disaster for the U.S. military." Adopting search and destroy operations means pursuing an elusive antagonist across unknown terrain. He was in their midst and attacked only when he had superiority on the field. His home. He avoided any combat where he was not superior. The results of the strenuous physical efforts were frustrating for the troops. "The battlefield effort gave the U.S. military an almost unbroken string of victories. On one occasion, the Tet Offensive of 1968, when the enemy stood and fought the American forces in a conventional style, the enemy was so badly beaten that it could not launch another major offensive for four years." (Hain)

Jean Lartéguy, at a dinner in Saigon in 1966, discussed the course of the war with an American colonel who confessed: "The Viet Cong are stronger than us in subversive warfare, and, if we wanted to follow them on their terrain, we would lose." Then the colonel played his card: "But we can impose another war on them, that of our technology and that of the new engineers. This one, we must win." Lartéguy confirms that the Viet Cong were surprised by the power of the first blows struck by the Americans, temporarily losing the "initiative of the war without having shaken their political-military organization and influence over the population."The American war engineers, through the massive use of helicopters, amphibious units, and B-52s, forced them to reconstruct their tactics." (Lartéguy, 1965)

However, the North Vietnamese's bite was so intense that, in his book, Colonel Hal Moore confirms that as soon as his troops introduced revolutionary airmobile helicopter tactics to Vietnam, the communist command ordered its soldiers to contact them by producing antidotes capable of neutralizing them. (Moore, 1992)

7.3 Vietnam War and Technology

The American Civil War, 1860-1865, was not a war of amateurs but the apprenticeship of a modern industrial conflict. A small-scale world war, it employed railroads, steamships, and riverine vessels, moving armies, massive supplies, and heavy equipment to distant and environmentally diverse theaters of operations.

In the Vietnam War, the US needed to gather intelligence from an adversary who was a master of camouflage and concealment, while the Americans were vulnerable and perfectly visible. Communists infiltrated the South Vietnamese, and the Viet Cong quickly mastered modern military techniques like their predecessor in the French war, the Viet Minh. At the beginning of the conflict, the French military defined their adversary as inspired but inexperienced. Later, they realized that "the Viet Minh has made remarkable progress." We must regard the truth in person: the adversary dominates us and uses the most modern interception procedures with a remarkable master." (Calves)

During the meal at the French Plantation, Hubert de Marais warns Captain Willard about his adversary. No matter what nomenclatures define him, it is always the same and determined Vietnamese: "The Vietnamese are brilliant. You never know what they think. If tomorrow the Vietnamese are communists, they will become Vietnamese terrorists. Moreover, this is something that you Americans will never understand, you Americans". (Screenplay)

The ease with which the Vietnamese access information about the antagonist, a soldier of the Foreign Legion. He was captured and interrogated by a Vietminh officer and asked about his origin and name. Every legionnaire adopts a fictitious name upon enlisting, concealing his nationality. The legionnaire told the Vietminh officer that he was Belgian by origin, and his name was precisely that. The Vietnamese replied ironically, "Come on, I know you are Breton, and I also know your real name." (Calves)

The Viet Cong employed various means to get close to their adversaries, since the combatant was indistinguishable from the innocent civilian. Jean Lartéguy describes the communist ingenuity in gathering information: a Vietnamese shoeshine boy working at the "American" base in Da Nang hid a microphone in the box where he kept his work tools. Transmitted to the Viet Cong the identification of each aircraft that took off by knocking on the box—so many knocks for a propeller plane, so many for a jet. Arrested and interrogated, he revealed a complex network of complicity involving Viet Cong agents, administrators, and South Vietnamese military personnel. (Lartéguy, 1965)

7.4 War, Intelligent Machines and Technology

Since the 13 colonies, the Americans have always been familiar with and have accepted new technologies, which helped, according to Hain, "to develop a new continent from coast to coast through the train and the telegraph. Technology made up for the lack of people in developing a new country" (Hain, 1999)

The Americans used electronic devices in Vietnam, developed by Harvard and MIT, to produce strategic information. As Paul Virilio points out, "the parachute drops of sensors all along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and continued in 1966 with the development of the Electronic McNamara Line, consisting of fields of acoustic (Acouboy, Spikebiy) and seismic (Adsid, Acousid) detectors spread along the Laos access routes, around US army bases, and especially the Khe San stronghold" (Virilio, 1989).

Lieutenant Colonel Drew summarized: "The American effort in Vietnam was the best that modern military science could offer. The array of sophisticated weapons used against the enemy boggles the mind. Combat units applied massive firepower using the most advanced scientific methods. Military and civilian managers employed the most advanced management science techniques to support combat units. The result was an almost unbroken series of American victories that somehow became irrelevant to the war. Ultimately, the best that military science could offer was not good enough." (Drew, 1985)

Manuel de Landa, analyzing the intelligent machines used in war, points out that "the replacement of human marksmanship by machines took a further step forward in the Vietnam War when mechanical intelligence migrated from the launching platform to the projectile itself." Soon, "robotic weapons machines capable of automatic target detection and friend/foe recognition" appeared (Landa, 2003). Insurrectionary warfare employed the art of war by producing unexpected alternatives and overturning technological and discursive certainties. In 1968, American planners were misled by the "incorrect assessment by RAND of the effect of area bombing on North Vietnam's willingness to resist, which led to their failure to predict the Tet offensive and contributed to the American defeat." (Landa, 2003)

8. The American War in Vietnam

After the French left, the American authorities supported the Diem regime and its national army, continuing the "containment policy" of the Truman Doctrine and the Cold War. (Franchini, II, 2011) In 1956, the Geneva Accords between France and the communist government provided for the holding of elections in the divided country. The government of South Vietnam and the US, fearful, opposed this desideratum. (Lacouture, 1966.) American planners and the Diem government knew that without elections, the RPVN would attack its counterpart in the South to reunify the country.

8.1 J. F. K. and the Camelot of the Rice Fields

Following the French defeat, Emperor Bao Dai retreated to his golden exile in southern France, appointing the Catholic Mandarin Diem to the government, whose constitutional façade concealed a corrupt public administration. Diem planned to turn South Vietnam into a base for counterattacks against the communist North to unify it. Hating France, he dedicated himself to eradicating the memory of the colonizer from his country. (Simpson, 1994) The intensification of the communist presence in Vietnam and Laos worried the Kennedy administration.

The copious American economic and military aid transformed the South into a bastion in the anti-communist struggle and a "creature that the US government's claim to be committed to it and obligated to ensure its survival, is hard to understand." (Walzer, 2000). After the Geneva Accords, critical military leaders and communist cadres remained dormant in the South. (Guan, 2002). Their progressive attacks against the Diem government intensified, unsettling the Kennedy administration. The corruption, Machiavellianism, and inefficiency of the Diem clan, hostile to the influential Buddhists, exhausted the patience of the American politicians and diplomats on the spot. Furthermore, they accused him of being distant from the population, whose desires they despised, making it easier for them to be captured by the brutal and efficient communist propaganda. (Simpson, 1994)

After supporting Diem for nine years, the US got rid of France and decided to remove him for good. The new American ambassador, Cabot Lodge, supported the sudden violent seizure of power led by General Minh. Launched on November 1, 1963, it resulted in Diem's execution. (Franchini, 2011) President Kennedy sent 8,000 American advisers and realized that his Vietnam policy had failed, being assassinated three weeks later in Dallas. (Toinet, 1998)

8.2 Lyndon Johnson and the Escalation

President Lyndon B. Johnson sent 40,000 combat troops to Vietnam. (Westad, 2013) Without an act that justifies a war, such as Pearl Harbor, he used the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, a weak but sufficient justification for intervention. According to Paterson, Johnson distorted facts "and deceived the American public about events that led to full U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War." (Paterson) The United States was at the height of its power, while the revolutionary Vietnamese in the South had the aid of the North, some weapons, and the art of war. (Appy, 1993)

McNamara's aggressive initiatives, supported by Congress on August 7, 1964, led to the aerial bombardment of the North in Operations Flaming Dart and Rolling Thunder. (Toinet, 1998) Lyndon

Johnson believed he could defeat the ragged Vietnamese peasants (even though each one was worth a million dollars) who came from a “raggedy-ass little fourth-rate country.”

8.3 Reflections on the Art of War

The widespread belief among American planners was that the French failure in Indochina was due to the incompetence of its army. The United States would win the war because of its economic and industrial power, powerful air force, aggressive shock force of the Marines, the helicopters, and ship-borne vehicles. They would win the war because they were better and God was with them. Moreover, they would go all out against the peasants dressed in black. As General Giap declared, it was necessary to “make war in the Vietnamese manner."We had to defeat superior forces with very little.” The war was for an entire people, “against a people’s army, supported by the people.” General Westmoreland said, “Make a war against the people; he did not understand all that. It wasn’t his fault.” (Simpson, 1994)

Insurrectionary and revolutionary warfare differed from all known warfare. More complex than guerrilla warfare, it aimed to “overthrow an existing government by any means. Insurgencies are more insidious than the two in that they have no definite beginning; their origins are not military but political, economic, and psychological. The insurgency is self-sustaining and does not need outside support. An insurgency sneaks up on the existing government slowly and quietly.” (Hain, 1999)

For Hain, “successful military operations combine military science and military art.” The first is a “systematic body of knowledge about the conduct of military affairs.” The second “is the systematic study, creative planning, and conduct of military affairs.” It requires analysis and meticulous study of past military campaigns, establishing “a balance between science and art.” While the war waged by the Americans employed heavy equipment and technology, the insurgency employed “military art.” General Giap, a student of foreign military campaigns, employed strategies originated from “strategists of Vietnamese History. For example, the Trung sisters, Tran Hung Dao, Nguyen Hue. We created our military art.” (Simpson, 1994)

8.4 Rally the Flag; the War Abroad Is the President’s Business

The American media and magazines, such as the prestigious Life Magazine, heavily covered the Vietnam War, which are brightened by superb photographic coverage. In 1965, its March 19 issue was a domestic issue reporting on Martin Luther King’s fight in Selma, Alabama; on April 16, it covered the fighting in Vietnam. Its cover featured an impressive photograph of a helicopter machine gunner with a dying comrade at his feet. On November 16, the cover featured a young Vietnamese man, suspected of being a Viet Cong man, blindfolded, with the caption: “The blunt reality of war in Vietnam.”

The relationship between the press and the military changed throughout the War. At the beginning of the intervention, the articles celebrated American military power. However, as victory grew more distant, the news disseminated by the command and the think tanks was confronted with reality. During a briefing in Saigon, General Westmoreland was confidently wrapping up the news when journalist Joe

Fried of the New York Daily News asked if he had finished speaking. Given the positive response, Fried said: “Now, let’s get serious.” (Simpson, 1994)

At the time, the dominant journalistic medium was television, informing and shaping the opinions of Americans and connecting them to national politics. (Mitchell, 1984) Television broadcasts entered homes at dinner time. (Lunch, 1979) In the early stages of the war, both Vietnam and foreign policy were of no interest to the American public. The Vietnam War, in particular, was the exclusive sphere of the presidency in which Lyndon B. Johnson controlled international relations. In 1966, journalist Martin Lipset confirmed: “The President makes opinion; he does not follow it” (Lunch, 1979), and the public complied with presidential orders patriotically, “rallying around the flag.”

Between 1966 and 1967, the American people supported the escalation of the Asian War and the increasing deployment of boots where the ground did not concern them. (Lunch, 1979) Conservatives, staunch anti-communists, supported the escalation of the conflict, anathematizing opinions suggesting the withdrawal of troops as national treason. The generous way America fought wars was by sending reinforcements and materials to its ally, South Vietnam. Most of the media enthusiastically welcomed the predictions of victory in Vietnam, printed in official communiqués. When Willard meets Kurtz, he reads a propaganda article from Time to the Captain, predicting the imminent American victory in the War (Fuller, 2019). Summary of the opera: America was invincible.

8.5 Tet: The Turning Point

The change in public opinion occurred on January 30, 1968, Tet Day, the Chinese Lunar New Year. The Viet Cong offensive surprised the United States, shaking its belief in final victory. (Lunch, 1979) It was as if all the efforts made up until then, the loss of lives and the expenses—were useless, which, for Mitchell, “soon changed this relationship and surfaced the congenital adversarial relationship between a free press and government. Before Tet, the Administration had led the public to believe that victory in Vietnam was well within the grasp of the United States and its allies”. (Mitchell, 1984). For Howard J. Simpson, senior officers of the U.S. Army and Marines surprised by the Tet offensive followed it through the media, given that “new hidden aspects of the war had been revealed. They all knew “Charlie” as a dangerous foe, but few considered him capable of mounting such a well-coordinated major offensive.” (Simpson, 1994).

The media impact destabilized American public opinion, from the euphoria of belief in victory and unrestricted trust in government structures to suspicion and disillusionment. Life’s beautifully illustrated articles changed the tone. The February 9 issue featured on the cover a Viet Cong survivor of the assault on the U.S. Embassy, escorted by G.I.s: “Fight for the Embassy: Guerrilla Terror Sweeps the Cities of Vietnam; at Khe Sanh 6,000 Marines Dig in and Wait for a Communist Assault.” (Life Magazine, 1968)

For the public, the Tet Offensive was a veritable “U.S. disaster presented by the networks caused such trauma that the American public simply could not recover.” General Giap lost many troops under

American firepower on a more relaxed and considered analysis. Despite the tremendous losses, Giap was victorious, not in Vietnam but in the United States. (Mitchell, 1984)

The victory in Vietnam was moving away from America, flapping its wings, demonstrating that in this war that destroys certainties, truths, and theories, including those "based on the assumption that mathematicians and peasants are equal, can never work" (Henlein, 2007). From then on, communist pressure on American combat troops grew, killing about 300 soldiers per month. The lack of victory, the growing protests against the war, and the problematic combat conditions in the rice fields and forests undermined the American forces' will to fight.

President Richard Milhous Nixon, elected on January 2, 1969, withdrew American troops, completed in 1971, entrusting the war to the South Vietnamese army. These forces could not face their motivated and well-equipped adversaries. They suffered great defeats and were plagued by desertions. Faced with the bleak future, General Dong of the ARV, a friend of Howard Simpson, murmured regretfully as he said goodbye: "It is not good." (Simpson, 1994) Nixon's motto, peace with honor, reflected the possible outcome as General Abram replaced General William Westmoreland, ending Search and Destroy operations. In 1972, President Nixon visited China, consolidating the withdrawal.

The end of the American war was as apocalyptic and surreal as the movie Apocalypse Now. Operation Frequent Wind drove thousands of desperate South Vietnamese overseas. After embarking those who could, the last Marines guarding the Embassy perimeter embarked. (Valdez, 1975) He risked his career commanding the aircraft carrier, African-American skipper Larry Chambers. There were too many refugees, and there was not enough room on deck. He ordered valuable helicopters to be thrown overboard, making room to shelter more Vietnamese refugees. Moreover, he concluded with a fateful phrase illustrating the end of colonial wars: "We made a promise to those folks that we would rescue them, and we didn't," Chambers said of the many left behind in what used to be South Vietnam. "In Afghanistan, we are abandoning the folks who supported us while we were there." (Military Times, August 15, 2012)

At the end of the French war, while the debates were taking place in Geneva, the Vietminh fought until the ceasefire. Once the peace agreements were signed, humiliated, embittered, but aware of their professionalism, the French soldiers packed up their belongings. On August 8, 1954, journalist Max Clos from Le Monde reported that the city of Hanoi and the French garrison were calmly and peacefully awaiting the official entry of the Vietminh. (Le Monde, 1954) In the tense moment, leader Ho Chi Minh avoided unnecessary hostilities. He ordered the people: "During the days when the French troops evacuate Hanoi and the surrounding villages, the population must maintain their cool and avoid causing the slightest incident. When the VPA soldiers arrive in the city, the inhabitants do not decorate the streets immediately but wait until the French are far enough away." (Lartéguy, 2014)

9. American Heroes, the Frontier, and the Vietnam War

The notion of the warrior hero and the frontier is part of the North American imagination alongside biblical heroes and those produced by the cultural industry: “Robinson Crusoe, Horatio Alger, Tom Edison, Jr and Frank Read, Jr, of the American dime novel, Edgar Rice Burroughs’ John Carter and Tarzan, the detective, the cowboy, James Bond, Superman, Batman, Luke Skywalker-almost anyone but that alienated wage-slave who pays some of his earnings for the fantasy.” (Slotkin, 2024)

For Richard Slotkin, “that frontier mythology in part revolves around a hunter hero who lives out his dreams in spiritual sympathy with the creatures of the wilderness, who teach him their secret lore.” The cunning frontier hero learned to fight with the indigenous people and, thus, defeated them. He took over their lands and knowledge by controlling the environment. (Slotkin, 2024) In the 1960s, President Kennedy presented to the country his vision of a new frontier in the world, extending from the United States to outer space. The notion was hailed by American conservatism, confirming America as the bastion of capitalist democracy against communist tyranny. The containment of communist aggression in the world would be carried out at any cost as “Lyndon Johnson’s political inheritance.” (Baritz, 1985)

9.1 Just Wars and Military Heroes

The wars fought by the United States have built nationhood by producing its pantheon of heroes, memory, and national mythology. The narratives celebrating them were disseminated to the public through literature and cinema. Furthermore, by “generations of veterans,” living testimonies “of the nature of war and the war in America.” (Linenthal, 1980) The Army, devoid of caste spirit, reduced the distance between itself and the American people. On his official website, the US Army is described as “America’s first national institution,” founded in 1775, a year before the Declaration of Independence, and originating from the English citizen militia, which in the US had “long-standing militia traditions and recently introduced professional standards.” (https://www.army.mil/1775/)

Since the end of World War II, the call for military service has been part of the way of life for young Americans. The baby boom after 1945 put 8 million individuals at the disposal of the armed forces at the beginning of the conflict in Southeast Asia. The Johnson administration ordered “a large-scale buildup of American ground troops in Vietnam and, in an attempt to deflect national attention from the escalation, decided to rely on the draft instead of activating the reserves.” The Vietnam War as it developed changed the “perception of the nature of war and the symbol of warrior in America.” (Linenthal, 1980)

9.2 War and Brutality. The Rejection of Veterans of an Unfortunate War

Most of the men drafted into Vietnam were poor, born in small towns in the interior of the country. A large number were African-Americans, stripped of their last drop of human dignity during training. “bullied, cajoled, and brutalized into malleable military manpower by foul-mouthed DIs (drill instructors).” (Appy, 1993) The Vietnam War, thanks to its unprecedented and controversial nature, gave rise to a new type of hero. Instead of being universally acclaimed, like the Roman god Janus, he is

two-faced. He is loved and hated simultaneously. This was the case with Lieutenant Calley, involved in the Mi Lay massacre, sometimes applauded, sometimes demonized, revealing "much about the limits of the American imagination." (Appy, 1993)

The celebrated American journalist Ernie Pyle, writing about the GIs who fought in WW2, explained that their greatness comes from the fact that they were not professional soldiers but "American boys, who by chance of fate had wound up with guns in their hands, sneaking up a death-laden street in a strange and shattered city. (...) Moreover, even though they weren't warriors born to the kill, they won their battles. That's the point." These veterans happily celebrated VE Day in New York. They confirmed their glorious participation by expressing positive confidence in life in peacetime. These feelings arise from the certainty of participating in a good and victorious War, despite being bloody.

Meanwhile, the embittered Vietnam veterans were carrying the legacy of the brutality of the insurrectionary war, where the enemy is indistinguishable from the civilians who must be defended and liberated. The accusation of extreme violence against the Vietnamese people was, for Appy, "the main cause of veterans' adjustment problems on returning home was societal hostility generated by the antiwar movement." (Appy, 1993) The traditional martial image "was turned upside down. The image of war as righteous and full of potential for a new world and the image of the classical American warrior rigidly and honorably fighting in a sacred cause, which has seen the noble sacrifice of Americans in many generations, did not fit the reality of war." (Linenthal, 1980)

The Vietnam War was the bastard and ugly child of the French failure, whose contagion the American command feared and sought to exorcise. However, as the conflict deepened and the enemy demonstrated unexpected combativeness, professional military men, such as Colonel Hal Moore, recognized that the French, despite everything, knew the terrain and the enemy's tactics.

Some American soldiers despised the South Vietnamese, accusing them of being cowards and corrupt. Vietnam, Before Diem's overthrow, are known as "a country with no army and no government." (Baritz,1985) The North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were admired for their fighting spirit, as if they were different peoples. Calves, a French veteran of Indochina, explained that his comrades felt similarly about the Vietnamese: "I fought alongside many soldiers who tended to imagine that there were two different peoples in Indochina. On one side, the fanatical Viet Minh threatened to live every day since then, and on the other side, the corruptible, indifferent Vietnamese were there. (Calves)

The attacks of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese killed Americans in combat at an "alarmingly high" rate. Forty-seven thousand two hundred forty-four died as a result of hostile action, and an additional 303,704 were wounded. (The Veterans Administration lists 23,014 of the wounded as 100 percent disabled.) Lucien Bodard noticed in the French war that the combatants of the South were bloodthirsty, fighting the foreign soldiers with hatred and extreme brutality. The communists of the North, on the other hand, were more rational. Convinced Marxists, they restrained their hatred for the antagonist, often preferring politically "correct" solutions. (Bodard, 1997)

10. Cinema and Nostalgia for Indochina

For Naomi Greene, many French films of the 1990s represented colonial nostalgia. (Greene, 1999) The filmmaker Pierre Schoendoerffer, a spokesman for French veterans of the colonial wars, covered French army operations for propaganda purposes. In the 1960s, Schoendoerffer produced two nostalgic films based on the Indochina War, when, according to Sherzer, France reviled the colonial war genre. (Sherzer, 1996)

France disdainfully rejected the theme of war in its cinema. Partly because of the national trauma caused by WWI, the defeat of 1940, or because of the aggressive presence of the left and its pacifist doctrine. In the film Apocalypse Now., the character Tutor, says, "Communists have always worked for peace wherever they are" (Screenplay). In an interview with Gene Siskel of the Chicago Tribune in 1973, French filmmaker François Truffaut declared himself against war films. He considered violence in cinema to be suspicious: "I find that violence is very ambiguous in movies. For example, some films claim to be antiwar, but I do not think I've seen an antiwar film. Every film about war ends up being pro-war." (Siskel, 1973)

French historian Marc Ferro, analyzing the ambiguity of violence in war films, believes that cinema does not produce pacifist films. Due to class, intellectual, or corporate contagion, it avoids criticizing militarism, not being anti-war enough. Almost all filmmakers failed in their attempts to expose militarism and the shortcomings of the military institution. (Ferro, 1993) In 1963 and 1964, interest in Vietnam emerged in France, and it was involved in the controversy of the American war and the reconciliatory diplomacy of President General De Gaulle. (Journoud, 2011) The French filmmaker Pierre Schoendoerffer, a war veteran captured in Dien Bien Phu, produced two films about Indochina from which he adapted two of his novels, 317th Section (1965) and Le Crabe-Tambour (1977). The action of the film 317th Section begins in May 1954, with its action running parallel to the fall of the fortified camp of Dien Bien Phu until its fall. (Edwards, 2016) Years later, during the American War, in 1967, Schoendoerffer made a documentary similar to that of the 317 Section, entitled The Anderson Platoon, winner of the Oscar for Best Foreign Film. He followed a platoon of the US infantry for three weeks on a search and destroy operation. The African-American officer Lieutenant Joseph B. Anderson, who later became a General, commanded the unit and reaffirmed the importance of film in his military career.

For Jamie Russell, films about the Vietnam War "isn't a history of the war itself." Watching dozens of them "won't give you much idea about the realities of war in Vietnam." (Russel, 2002) James T. Quinlivan, who fought in Southeast Asia, criticized the cinematic representation in these terms: "Vietnam was a war, not a movie," he declared. Cinema artificializes the reality of the conflict in its narrative. Here, we apply the notion of memory-image as an equivalent of the time-image, where the physical movement of the Section in Vietnamese space becomes a mental movement activated by memory or recollection. (Rodowick, 1979) Thus, a documentary as a moving image captures time and space, inserting the filmmaker and spectator in the place of the combatant.

Quinlivan believes that "Vietnam movie meets some version of that charge, but Vietnam news documentaries have always fared better, perhaps a tribute to the people who risked their lives to produce them. In 1967, the first major documentary appeared as a CBS News Special Report featuring a film by French director Pierre Schoendoerffer." (Quinlivan, 2017). Anderson's Platoon was a friendly look at the soldiers, showing the reality of the war to America. The film deserves the respect of Americans for "an honest effort to show us the American war while it was still young." (Quinlivan, 2017)

10.1 Apocalypse Now and Le Crabe-Tambour

Schoendoerffer made the ambitious feature film *Le Crabe-Tambour* (*Drummer-Crab*) in 1977, two years before Coppola filmed Apocalypse Now. Based on a novel written by Schoendoerffer himself, translated into English by the celebrated British writer Patrick O'Brien, entitled *The Paths of the Sea* (1977), and was published by the English publisher Collins. The film *Crabe-Tambour* was enthusiastically applauded by North American critics to the point where critic Vincent Canby of The New York Times defined it as "the grandest, most beautiful adventure films in years," writing that it "may be somewhat old-fashioned in its emphasis on courage, honor and the glory of war, no matter what the cause. However, it's also wonderfully old-fashioned in its convoluted, romantic narrative, which moves from Vietnam during the collapse of France's control of Indochina in the 1950s to East Africa, Algeria, Brittany, Newfoundland, and the stormy fishing grounds on the Grand Banks." (Wikipedia) Would F.F. Coppola have watched the film? Francis has a solid academic background, "becoming the first of a new generation of younger, film-school-trained directors who would come to dominate contemporary American film" (Hellmann, 1986). *Crabe-Tambour* does not appear on his list of favorite foreign films. His robust and exceptional filmography confirms his diversified professional training, strengthened by his interaction with the works of other authors.

Francis Coppola engaged in a dialogue with advanced military technology techniques. Coppola, a great admirer of the pioneering French filmmaker Abel Gance, also shared the passion for military commander techniques. Adopting technology to film in a studio using electronic elements eliminated the randomness, disorder, and chance of military actions and filming on location. Virilio points out, "Coppola has developed in an interesting direction since the partial disappointment of Apocalypse Now. The emotional *One From the Heart* is more of a war movie than Apocalypse Now. Coppola used military equipment like the Xerox 'Star' and naval computer system, and his cost-benefit approach is like the attitude of a modern army," eliminating errors and mistakes. (Virilio, 1989) As Landa wrote, in cinema, filming is like making a war of intelligent machines!

There is a fraternal and intense dialogue between film directors and films. The same phenomenon of reception and reading occurs with literature., In literature, this interlocution is notorious. Core texts such as the Bible, Homer, Shakespeare, and Cervantes are guides, friends, and foundations for the world's greatest novelists. (Bloom, 2001). Beugnet and Schmid analyze the complex transposition of a literary work to the cinema, exemplified by Proust's *A la Recherche du temps Perdu*. Faithfully

following a literary work results in a resounding failure in the cinema: a copy of the copy. The choice of the novel seems obvious for financial reasons, duration, and setting. Historically, literary adaptations on the screen have become popular in times of war or economic crisis, as with Apocalypse Now. (Beugnet, Schimid, 2006) Akira Kurosawa produced his immortal *Ran* (1985), based on Shakespeare's tragedy, *King Lear*. For film director Ryan Coogler, the best advice he can give to "young filmmakers" is "to watch movies."

Quentin Tarantino got used to watching "a movie a day," while Martin Scorsese tirelessly discusses the foreign films he watches and recommends. For David Fincher, watching movies allows the filmmaker to explore his medium to the fullest and evaluate the strategies used by different directors. (Atkinson, 2018) 10.2 Crabe-Tambour, the extreme character, from Willsdorff to Kurtz. The hero of *Le Crabe-Tambour* is the naval officer, Willsdorff, brother of the solid military man *from Séction 317éme*. Commanding his patrol boat, he fights on the rivers and in Indochina's jungles. These waterways, in the words of French Admiral Paul Ortoli, were "the key to Indochina, for nearly 90 percent of the usable communications were in the form of rivers and canals." (Rielly, 2024)

Like Mayréna and Kurtz, Willsdorff wears an impeccable white uniform and carries an enigmatic black cat on his lap. On the deck of his boat, sailing on the Black River, a sailor plays arias on the hunting trumpet, to Willsdorf's delight and as a bizarre adornment for a mission in the jungle. The boat sails in the mysterious fog, as mysterious as that which surrounds the French Plantation, when suddenly, the invisible Viet Minh shoots and kills the bugler. His body is carried on the deck of the boat, just as Willard sails carrying the body of Private Clean on the deck of the boat. The makeshift French naval base on the Black River is reminiscent of the poorly constructed structure of the French Plantation. European sailors, Vietnamese sailors, and their families live promiscuously on the base. One of the sailors is married to a Vietnamese woman who, later, in France, will faithfully follow him. At the base, Willsdorff takes command, suggesting with his uniform a new discipline to be followed. Pointing to the black flag with skull and crossbones, waving defiantly on the vessel's mast, he suggests they are part of the Marine Nationale. Pointing to the skull and crossbones marks on the hull, numbering Viet Minh killed by the crew, he orders: "We are no pirates, are we? And We're not headhunters, either. Thank you. See you later, gentleman." (Screenplay)

Willsdorf fraternizes with the traditional Vietnamese landlords, participating in macabre ceremonies with the severed heads of enemies, recalling the Cambodian underground shelter of Kurz, that infernal Platonic cave. The French Navy patrol boat provided fire and logistical support to the isolated garrisons, constantly vulnerable to attacks along the major rivers, reproducing the ambushes that the Viet Minh carried out on the land roads. After rescuing the threatened positions, Lieutenant Willsdorf sits on a throne placed on the ship's quarterdeck. Like a king, dressed in a white uniform, visible and vulnerable, stroking the cat, he delights in listening to the bugler playing the hunting horn.

Lieutenant Willsdorf was inspired by the adventurous life of French naval lieutenant Pierre Guillaume (1925-2002). After three tours in Indochina, he commanded an armored vessel called the Dinassaut.

After Dien Bien Phu, the Algerian war broke out. When General De Gaulle negotiated Algerian independence, an uprising of colonial soldiers opposed to the loss of the empire broke out. Guillaume supported the rebels and led a wandering life after leaving the Navy. Captured by a warlike tribe in Somalia, our hero led it, following in the footsteps of Mayréna and Conrad-Kurtz. (Guillaume, 2006) Jacques Perrin (1941–2022), who played Willsdorf, was a celebrated young actor of the 1960s.

Just as the similarity between the names Willsdorff and Willard is notable, so is the youthful beauty of the actors Martin Sheen and Jacques Perrin. The images of Perrin-Willsdorf with his face covered in mud are very close to those of Captain Benjamin Willard-Martin Sheen. Let's not forget the young French muse, Aurore Clément, the widow of the French Plantation, who played a role in Crabe-Tambour.

We think once again, supported by Deleuze and Rodowick, that Schoendoerffer nostalgic films are films more about journeys into the interior of the land of memory, in dreams or in the imaginary than about the hardness of the physical world, the dated historicity of events. (Rodowick, 1997) The films refuse this uncomfortable and constricting rigidity; they prefer to flow through the subjective softness of reminiscence. In other words, if for Da Vinci, the painting was a "cosa mentale," the cinema of Schoendoerffer and Coppola is also a "cosa mentale."

10.2 Apocalypse Now: An Odyssey?

2019, the remastered and extended version of the *Apocalypse Now final cut*, including the French Plantation, was released. It was the first American film about the Vietnam War, after John Wayne and Ray Kellogg, directed *Green Berets* (1968). Coppola shot it in the jungles of the Philippines, where the crew and actors lived in isolation as an American unit in the Search and Destroy operations. Episodes of indiscipline and constant tension also broke out on Coppola's film set. (Alex Hammer, Daily Mail) The jungle, tense and chaotic environment can be seen in the documentary Hearts of Darkness: *A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*. (Phillips, 2012) Fought as an incessant personal battle, and, like the American war, filming was an insane task: "We were in the jungle; we were too many men, we had access to much money, too much equipment." (Phillips, 2024)

According to Nguyen, the American war in Vietnam is insane. "The film shows no American in Vietnam who is untouched by madness." The madness, but also the perfidy, when "the suave officers with their good manners and euphemistic language, who give Willard his mission "to terminate Kurtz's command." (Nguyen, 2015) Coppola's film is disorienting and disturbing, using Vietnam to capture the insanity of all war and drawing on Conrad to suggest that war might be an outgrowth of an awfulness at the core of humanity itself. (Phillips, 2023) The film cost between 25 and 20 million dollars, instead of the 12 million originally planned. Coppola, without a personal fortune but with a wife and children, mortgaged his house, completing the film in three years. 10. 4 Apocalypse Now and the Pentagon

The reception of a work of art – in this case, a film – constantly changes. However, as Ferro points out, "the historical and social reading of a film allows us to "reach invisible areas of the past of societies." (Ferro,1977) Analyzing the bizarre epic of the reception of the French film *La Grand Illusion* (1937) by

Jean Renoir, we feel the dramatic oscillations in the filmmaker's discourse and the public's reception. Shown before WWII, the left-wing applauded it as a pacifist film, leading to its censorship in Belgium, Nazi Germany, and the United States. After 1945, under pressure from the press, the left-wing, and the Resistance, the film underwent many cuts and successive alterations, showing the complexity of the reception phenomenon. Some saw it as warmongering and anti-Semitic; others saw it as filo-Semite and anti-British. (Ferro, 1995)

The reception of the film *Apocalypse Now Redux* by audiences and critics was not without controversy. Many viewers and critics, notably military personnel, accused it of being anti-American. For Coppola, his work was "pro-American, denying that it was anti-Pentagon or even anti-war," and, therefore, it is "anti-lie, not an anti-war, film. I am interested in the contradictions of the human condition." The dichotomy or ambiguity attracted the director, and "it will be about war and the human soul" between good and evil. The dualism is present in the speech of the French character Roxanne to Willard: "There are two of you, don't you see? One that kills...and one that loves. And they said to me, "I don't know whether I and an animal or a god." (Screenplay)

The military was elated when Coppola sought technical and material support from the Pentagon. For them, the film allowed them to present their version of the war, "an attractive setting for a good action-adventure movie that focused on soldiers doing their assigned jobs professionally." After reviewing the script, the Pentagon refused to support it because it addressed issues "real or imagined, that happened or could have happened during the Vietnam War." The military hated the film's satire and irony and was bothered by Colonel Kilgore's cowboy image, riding helicopters and asking for his surfboard. Berman masterfully analyzed this scene, emphasizing the stylistic effects of the uniform, speech, and gestures, identifying the virtuous and fearless American war hero. (Berman, 2023) When the Pentagon suggested that a script "more logical and factual." would benefit both, Coppola decided to produce his film without the military suggestions. (Suid, 1978) He decided to follow his imaginary paths, creating his war, which seems crazy until we read about the real war, which is much crazier than we believe. As Proust suggested, Coppola creates a work of art by modeling it according to the changes in their reflections. (Beugnet, Schmid, 2006)

11. The Mute of Darkness: Kurtz, Mayrena, Willsdorff

Coppola and John Milius' script claims its inspiration in Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. Through Conrad, Coppola wanted to convey to the viewer the "horror, the madness, the sensuality, and the moral dilemma of the Vietnam War. (...)" John Millius once read Conrad's work and, when trying to adapt it, realized that it was impossible to do so. Many writers enthusiastically approve of their novels reaching the big screen. The impasse lay in the complex procedures of the metamorphosis of a work conceived in words to another medium based on images.

For French researchers, Clerc and Macaire, the adaptation of the novel for the cinema is a meeting place of sensibilities. Literary adaptations are essential for cinema and literature; the visual aspect of

the other medium is a vast and rich field of dialogue that feeds the other. Literary adaptations are part of the history of cinema, teaching filmmakers to read by thinking about the images suggested by the printed material. In adaptation, mimesis is a psychic and social rebirth of a practice, where the word or behavior reflects an analogous image. For Jacques Ranciére, this practice is a specific regime of art whose power is to construct stories, rework characters, dramatize actions, and amplify feelings. (Ranciére, 2001) In Ranciére's point of view, filmmakers such as Milius, Coppola, and Reich (from *Dispatches*) have taken a new path. Adapting Conrad is set in the Congo in 1880, and it does not make a mimetic adaptation. They move the action from Africa to any other place that serves as a setting. The result achieved is post-modernist, employing irony and parody, "to comment on the world in the same way". (Hutcheon) The final script completely rejects the writing conventions of the original novel, creating a confluence between literature and cinema. (Clerc & Macaire, 2004). The result allows the filmmaker's sensitivity to invest his images with a new meaning. The two Godfathers show how Coppola builds intricate montages, pioneering digital technology. He is a Promethean auteur, isolating himself in the Philippines, where, for three painful years, experiencing enormous psychological exhaustion, he produced and completed a production. (Alava, 2008)

11.1 Between the Sacred and the Profane: The Symbolism of Rivers

Marlon Brando plays the character Kurtz, a poet-warrior living outside the Vietnam War. He dominates his private army of "Montagnards," who revere him as supernatural. *Apocalypse Now* compares this passage to Conrad's Congo, "where the white trader exerts his power as a god over a primitive people." Conrad's Kurtz is in the service of King Leopold of Belgium, using modern weapons to subjugate the local population to personal and European goals. The American Kurz imposes chaos with his autonomy and usurpation of the divine role. His death, decreed by the high command, implies a return to the North American evangelical Christian order. Captain Willard is entrusted with a military and religious mission that absolves him of sins and excesses.

The muddy waters of mighty rivers connect the dialogue: the Thames in London, the Congo, where Kurtz lives, and the Nung River in Vietnam and Cambodia. Rivers are symbolically associated with the idea of purification, with the Jordan being the champion of all sin-washers. However, the rivers in our narratives do not purify. The rivers of Asia defile the bodies of Willsdorf and Willard with mud, feces, and blood. For Kurtz, the river symbolizes death; for Willard, it represents life, purification, and rebirth. (Eliade, 1971)

In Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the character Marlowe poetically reconstructs the arrival of Roman imperialism in Britannia, taking galleys up the river to London amid the darkness of bright days. "But darkness was here yesterday. Imagine the feelings of a commander of a fine —what d'ye call them?— trireme in the Mediterranean, ordered suddenly to the north;(...). Imagine him here—the very end of the world, a sea the color of lead, a sky the color of smoke, a kind of ship about as rigid as a concertina— and going up this river with stores, orders, or what you like. Sandbanks, marshes, forests, savages—precious little to eat fit for a civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink. No Falernian

wine here, no going ashore. Here and there, a military camp lost in a wilderness, like a needle in a bundle of hay—cold, fog, storms, disease, exile, and death—death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush ...They were men enough to face the darkness" (Conrad, 1899)

In Conrad's work, Marlow must spy on the mad Kurtz. In Apocalypse, the sympathetic and soft officers order Willard to assassinate Kurtz. In Melville's *Moby Dick*, the self-assigned mission of Captain Ahab's mission is to kill the White Whale in his watery refuge. Like Mayréna and Kurtz, Ahab seduces his multi-ethnic crew, who worship him as a god. Ahab comes from a Puritan background in New England, but he does not preach the word of God. God. He is the deity who inhabits the *Pequod*, a hidden part of the voyage in the darkness of the cabin, walking the deck at night. He controls the life and death of the men of the Pequod, using refined cunning through a pagan ritual to obtain the oath and loyalty of the primitive crew members.

For Coppola, the French Plantation is the ancestral Sicily of the Corleones, a window, a diegesis in space and time. The Plantation is a "stop" on Willard's journey across the Nung River, a journey to another time and another space, "it was the same as going back in time, first you go back 40 years, and then after the French Plantation, you go back a millennium into premedieval times. So somehow, I was hoping for a version that most crystallized the movie's theme.When we did Redux, we just put things back in.We never cut it, shrunk it a little bit, or rebalanced it." (Fuller, 2019)

11.2 Mayréna and Kurtz

Colonel Kurtz resembles Mayréna and Willsdorf. However, it can also resemble General Westmoreland. One might wonder whether the characters were read or seen. However, Coppola insists on Conrad's work, perhaps because it is in the public domain and has excellent commercial and anti-imperialist success. One of Kurtz's avatars is the French captain of Spahis, Marie-Charles, David de Mayréna (1842-1890). This soldier left France and went to Indochina. Visiting the town of Kontum, realizing that the French did not dare to climb these high plateaus, organized an armed expedition to the land of the Sedang people. Mayréna's physical build was above average men's, and he appeared to the Sedangs as a man endowed with extraordinary powers, perhaps even a deity. In a short time, the adventurer was acclaimed king by the Sedangs in 1888.

The French colonial authorities realized that Mayréna was making them capitis diminutio. Returning to France, he, saw his Sedang kingdom militarily occupied by French troops. The celebrated French writer and politician André Malraux was fascinated by this bizarre adventurer, whom he called a "fantôme de gloire." He immortalized it in a soap opera entitled *Le Règne du Malin*, and even planned the production of "un film qui, s'il avait vu le jour, aurait rejoint dans la légende du septième art L'Homme qui voulut être roi et *Apocalypse Now*. ("https://indomemoires.hypotheses.org/230)

11.3 Apocalypse Now and the Place of Speech

When analyzing the cinematographic production of the Vietnam War, Russell realized that it was not understood from a historical perspective. While films about WW2 depicting great battles end up defeating the enemy, the Vietnam War only seeks to make sense. It was a long war for its time. It was

an insurgency fought in a counterinsurgency. A drawn-out conflict was reduced to patrols, skirmishes, and small attacks. Eventually, a battle was fought in an explosion of restlessness, positioning the war to continue, exasperatingly slowly. A war that defied logic, preventing one from knowing whether one was losing or winning. The more antagonists killed, the more distant victory became. War, after all, boils down to this: compiling statistics on enemy casualties, kill ratios, body counts, casualty figures, and the work of bureaucrats, mathematicians, and computers. (Russel) In this way, war becomes a threatening heterotopia. Coronal Kurtz represents this heterotopia because it threatens order. After all, extreme logic and reason are unleashed in wild dreams; as the Spanish painter Goya wrote, the dream of reason produces monsters.

For Slotkin, Hollywood is a corporate factory that creates myths and imaginary worlds and supplies the markets with digestive films. (Slotkin, 2024) Nguyen, in a more acidic opinion, considers that American cinema and its system made the Vietnam War "fashionable and lucrative items on the shelf of the entertainment market." Coppola "did not attempt to represent the war, nor the people, but appropriated their identity, image, and associations to sell his commodity to American and world audiences, even though the end product was a superficial, stereotypical depiction of the country and its people. Apocalypse Now also reinforces the stereotypes of the Vietnamese as uncivilized and passive." (Nguyen, 2015)

Lucas believes that the market dominance of cinema is necessary to maintain the importance of the director and his editing strategies and use of words. The director is an author capable of "revision – and deepening through editing–critical analysis and poetic art. Revision is understood as a cinematographic subject – however much the topic of its less cinematographic character regarding the image persists –an appropriate tool for the essay or the first-person reflection on one's practice and creative doubts – to share the process. (Lucas, 2013)

Willard's speech is internal, off-screen, the chorus of Greek theater, unifying and giving meaning to the actions. However, his memorialist testimony needs to be completed and essayistic. Apocalypse Now is an intuitive work on the cinematographic cut, the transition between shots. An open and continuous process, a phenomenon for Lucas that is "of the film itself making and thinking itself." (Lucas, 2013)

A careful reading of Conrad and observation of the film suggest that the novel's protagonist, Marlow, is a storyteller present in his narrative like Benjamin Willard. He reminds us of an omniscient narrator,

taking up Macaire and Clerc's analysis of the difficulty of transposing literature to cinema due to the double that transposition creates, the receiver and the narrator. Postmodern man is more than ever confused with images. How can we use language, the traditional instrument of rationality, and the visceral experience of illusion? This is the dilemma that specific texts present in the face of postmodernity. (Clerc & Macaire, p. 200).

12. Apocalypse Now and the Sequel to the French Plantation Apocalypse Now

This notable in-progress work is a notable achievement in cinema history. (Hellmann, 1986). Graham Fuller described the Final Cut version as "the definitive, 182-minute version of his magnum opus—a Vietnam fantasy four decades in the making." (Fuller, 2019) What is new about it from the old file? Redux included scenes that the public had not seen before: Willard's larky theft of Kilgore's favorite surfboard, which forces the crew to hide the PBR under a canopy of foliage; their layover at an abandoned medevac station, where Chef and Lance fool around with two stranded Playmates, played by Colleen Camp and Cyndi Wood; an interlude at a plantation run by members of a French colonial family, who appear to be ghosts". Another ghost is the copy of Time, read by Kurtz to Willard, predicting the American victory in Vietnam. Accused of anachronism, Coppola clarifies that it is a "scene that doesn't play for modern audiences." (Fuller, 2019)

For Lucas, the reality is a film without a script, one that acts without training, and an actor who passes and speaks without controlling the sequences. However, Apocalypse Now is a rehearsal, where the director experiments and reviews the cinematographic montage and noticing inconsistencies, buries or resurrects an entire sequence: "which I will focus on in the chapter. I decided to analyze this scene because it is a significant part of the additional footage, but perhaps more importantly, because this sequence dramatically transforms the representation of the Vietnam War in the film and changes the affective power of this ending." (Lucas, 2013) Maria de Filippo disagrees with the later revisions thinking, like Marc Ferro, "I am, however, opposed in principle to the idea of a director's cut, preferring to view films as historical artifacts rooted in the temporality of their production." (Filippo, 2001) A Marketing pressure grew on Coppola who should deliver a viable Picture to the market after so many years of production and investment, despite rumors that the film cost "doubling the budget to a then-staggering $32 million, Coppola felt compelled to limit the running time to about 2-1/2 hours (original 35 mm version ultimately ran 153 minutes).

For this reason, Coppola streamlined his picture as much as he could. Considerable footage was jettisoned, and two sequences in particular — an additional interlude with the Playboy playmates and the French plantation scene — entered the realm of legend." (McCarthy, 2001)

The final work added forty-nine minutes of footage vital to a historical understanding of the conflict and the Indochinese colony. The war began around the same time as Kurtz in the Congo in 1878, ending in 1954 in Dien Bien Phu. (Russell, Jamie) The new version "has added fifty-three minutes of footage to an epic-length film for Maria Filippo. With *Apocalypse Now Redux* ringing in at 197 minutes, Coppola and his audience are embarking on a real tour of duty – and like the Vietnam War itself, this is no in-and-out operation. (San Filippo, 2001) For Toddy, "this amazing new work adds 53 minutes of dramatic footage to the 1979 release, making for a weightier, more nuanced and fulsome version of his Vietnam War epic.

Graham Fuller presented the final version as an apotheosis between the director and his audience: "The 80-year-old director has, in fact, removed more than six frames from his hallucinatory Vietnam War

epic, which is returning to theaters today and on home video on August 27—in its third incarnation—40 years after its initial release. The metaphor-laden movie has not only been lavishly restored, but significantly trimmed; *Final Cut*, as the latest version is subtitled, is 20 minutes shorter than the 202-minute extended edition, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, that Coppola issued in 2001." (Fuller, 2021)

The Final Cut adds about forty-nine minutes of the rejected original footage. It gives the film meaning and gives the American soldiers an original sense of their presence in Southeast Asia. The sequence is straightforward. Willard's patrol boat arrives at a ghostly French plantation, where the owners, surrounded by a troop of partisans, invite them to dinner. Confronting during the meal with nostalgic visions of the planters who reveal the origins of the American intervention and war. For Toddy McCarthy, our perception of the film and the war itself becomes clearer. "If the original "Apocalypse Now was a narrow, swiftly flowing river that gradually closed in the patrol boat carrying Captain Willard into a heart of darkness, *Apocalypse Now Redux* is a wide river of greater depth, more variable currents, and some fascinating new ports of call." (McCarthy, 2001)

As they approach the strange ghostly structure involved, the fog of the river, Willard, and his crew are met by a band of French soldiers and bodyguards from the plantation, whose owner, Hubert De Marais, welcomes them and resolves the impasse of Clean's burial. An American soldier who has studied French cuisine serves as an interpreter. Willard glimpses Roxanne fleetingly on the balcony, and she desires him to be her partner.

Willard and his crew are then invited to dinner at a reception reminiscent of the one enjoyed by Howard Simpson. The magnificent setting is bathed in the golden light of a tropical sunset, in a twilight atmosphere of French presence, heralding the end of American intervention. De Marais, superbly portrayed by Christian Marquand, presides over the table without any affected elegance. There is, however, an impatience in his gestures and speech. He proudly refers to the property as if it were part of his body; it has been theirs for over seventy years and will remain so until the day they die.

On the other hand, the French war appears at every step of the American intervention as if it were a ghost in the mists, just like the French plantation or the cemetery of the colonial troops in *Go, tell the Spartans (1978).* It haunts, disturbs, frightens, brings a chilling vision of the future.

Apocalypse Redux was a version in which the indispensable chronological position of the French Plantation sequence was sacrificed, seriously mutilating the film. The dechronology broke the narrative, a fundamental principle of cinematic aesthetics. The sequence is essential in Coppola's film. Its invisible bonds make Kurtz a Quixote without Sancho, a King Lear without his daughters and sons-in-law, an Ahab without Moby Dick. Moreover, as Beugnet and Schmid point out, regarding Bergson and Deleuze's definition of the consistency of the crystal: "The Crystal image constantly exchanges the two distinct images which constitute it, the actual image of the present which passes and the virtual image of the past which is preserved." But eventually, "the cinema of time creates such

'crystal images' – images where past and present, the visual and the actual, have become inseparable." (Beugnet & Schmid, 2006)

On the other hand, the guests at the table discussing the plantation rely, according to Halbwachs, on each other's memories, elaborating the state that Virilio calls "new cinematic anamorphosis." They recover their past using a great abundance of details, returning to the stable past, obliterating the unstable present and the uncertain future. (Virilio, 1980)

Would the suppression of the French plantation sequence originate in the cultural estrangement between the two countries? For some experts on cultural relations between France and America, the love-hate relationship between the two is mainly due to their ignorance of each other. There are other reasons, as both sides harbor a great deal of prejudice and stereotypes that generate prejudice. American culture, through blocks of meanings whose stereotypes disseminate private opinions in the media, conservative government, and political circles. (Bishop, 1995)

12.1 Kurtz's Death, between Ritual and Punishment, Redemption

Kurtz's death involves ritual aspects of sacrifice and liberation. When we think with Eliade, we consider the mission entrusted to Willard – to kill Kurtz – as a rite of passage from puberty to adulthood. The first test is perhaps the sexual relationship with Roxanne. Here, the woman is the seductress, attracting the young soldier to her bedroom, like the virtuous matron of Ephesus. (Petronius Arbiter, 2023) Roxanne keeps in her memory the image of her husband, a dead "lost" soldier, and seduces the virile and handsome young soldier who is also "lost" as a substitute for the dead one.

Coppola recalls that "it is in the background while Willard looks at Roxanne. That brings back some memory of the original Willard we met at that Saigon hotel room, and you realize he has no wife any longer and that he got divorced, and there is some part of him that's empty. I felt he could feel alive again, and I thought it useful to know about him." (Katey Rich, 2019)

Every passage of puberty involves dramatic trials using sacred objects, followed by an actual or fictitious death, ending in a symbolic resurrection. (Eliade, 1969) When beginning the trials, the young people isolate themselves in the woods, like Willard, hiding in temples, huts, and caves. At the end of the trials, they are reborn as adults. Willard sailed to the Plantation in his patrol boat. The place where he must kill Kurtz is a path and a cave that are, for Barthes, one "dreadful place, tragic site", the dark place where one enters and then leaves for the light, reborn. (Barthes, 1983)

Moreover, going to Vietnam, the North Americans, like the Romans, arriving by the Thames in London in Conrad's narrative, which means entering the dark initiatory cave. Going through the test of war and colonial conquest. The deaths, the fires, the destroyed bridges, the rapes of playmates, the bombings, and the deaths of friends transform Willard into the one who integrates the foundational revelation of the mystery. (Eliade, 1969) Kurtz holds cursed knowledge; he created a dark, intestinal, cavernous, and chaotic world. Willard, meanwhile, will go through the ultimate test: the sacrifice of killing his symbolic and oppressive father. (Burkert, 1991)

For Nguyen, when Coppola inserts the order to assassinate the symbolic father, Kurtz, "it also suggests a totemic identification between hunter and prey- a connection that is developed dramatically by intercutting his murder with the ritualistic slaughter of the water buffalo. (Nguyen, 2015) Jean Lartéguy stated that in Vietnam in 1962, half-naked American special forces soldiers participated in the buffalo killing ceremony, smeared themselves with blood, and drank chum, a local rice drink. (Lartéguy) On the other hand, Kurtz knows that the time of his death has come and surrenders to it without resistance when it would be easy to kill Willard. (Benveniste, v 2, 1969)

Benveniste would designate Kurtz as an "optima offering" (Benveniste, 1969) because, in Latin terminology, sacrifice contains the Latin expression mature, originating from mate, courage, and honor. The sacred is conjugated in the expression *mactare uictimam*, to offer a victim in sacrifice. Kurtz, like a legendary king, will be killed in the secret chamber, in silence and darkness, in a bloodbath inspired by the death of the buffalo, just like Caesar, stabbed in the Senate, replacing the ancient human sacrifice of prisoners of war. (Marquel, 1927) The reference to Gaius Julius Caesar recalls Marlon Brando's extraordinary performance as Marc Anthony in Mankiewicz's film *Julius Caesar(1953)*. A Marlon Brando hidden in the shadows (everyone knew about his body fat) recalls the observation of Lee Strasberg and Elia Kazan. They stated that an actor's face could not live without his body. In *Apocalypse Now*, the concealment of Brando's deformed body signals Kurtz's sinful past to be hidden. Brando's formidable face stands out in the chiaroscuro, a tormented Kurtz who recognizes his past sins but serenely awaits the death blow. (Warren, 2002)

13. Epilogue

"First, we didn't know ourselves. We thought that we were going into another Korean War, but this was a different country. Secondly, we didn't know our South Vietnamese allies... And we knew less about North Vietnam. Who was Ho Chi Minh? Nobody really knew. So, until we know the enemy and know our allies and know ourselves, we'd better keep out of this kind of dirty business. It's very dangerous" (Taylor, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_in_the_Vietnam_War).

After the defeat of the French, the United States entered Vietnam, ready to replace them in the anti-communist moon, assuming a military outing, an easy victory. Meanwhile, the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese fought for their independence and the reunification of divided 1945 the thousand-year-old country. They were fighting for two thousand years of history. The American intervention used technology, electronics and unbeatable calculations, neutralized by the surprising tactics employed by the ingenious adversaries. With no victory in sight, the war of electronic certainty and statistics of dead enemies disappointed American planners and think tanks, reflecting the phrase of the Spanish painter Goya: "The dream of reason produces monsters."

The American troops, exhausted by the incessant combat with no victory in sight, became violent and suffered from the syndrome of defeat. The reversal of expectations shook the country's culture, temporarily declining the cult of military and frontier heroes. Virtuous and brave, these winners of just

wars lost their aura in the Vietnam War. The restoration of the masterful sequence of the French Plantation recovers the origin of the apocalyptic and insane war that Captain Willard is waging.

Hubert de Marais welcomes him into his sumptuous home as an ally with a mighty arsenal capable of winning and ensuring the survival of the plantation. Hubert explains the essential lessons of the French struggle, but the Americans do not understand them; they despise them. They detest Southwest Asia and cannot love the local people. Deliberately ignoring the lessons of the French defeat was an American mistake; in the words of the writer and diplomat Howard Simpson, "Following the French defeat and even though the United States itself was soon to become directly involved in Vietnam, American planners and strategists largely ignored the French experience. The French had lost. We, with our overwhelming technological power, were going to win. Our gung-ho spirit and can-do philosophy obscured the lessons of history." (Simpson, 1994)

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