

20 Years later The Vietnam of the Spirit.

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Since the beginning of the motion picture era, the adaptation of written fiction has been one of the richest sources of the visual literary medium. From time to time, scholars have tried to analyse the process. The purpose of this study is to examine the process itself. The question is approached both from the technical point of view, and the impact of the literary devices used in the process. They underline the importance of written fiction as a source translated into the moving images of the film medium.

It must be said, of course, that adaptation has been more successful with some directors than with others, or with some literary works than with others. The lack of success in Visconti's version of *L'Etranger* or the success of Kazan's film version of *East of Eden* offer us examples which serve to accentuate Coppola's masterful efficiency in adaptation.

Coppola was quite successful in other adaptations of novels, specifically *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *The Godfather* (1969). What made it difficult for him to adapt *Heart of Darkness*, so that it remained only the skeleton of *Apocalypse Now*? What about the inclusion of the poetry from *Heart of Darkness* and what dimensions are added by it?

If one looks at the list of works Coppola entrusted to the celluloid medium, one might well wonder why he specialized in adapting written fiction, and why he chose certain works over others. Why, for instance, did Coppola transpose the framework of *Heart of Darkness* (colonial occupation of the Congo by the Belgians), to the Vietnam War? Why does he have his journalist quote from *The Hollow Men*?

Cinema is often thought to appeal more to passive imagination (because the director presents prefabricated images), while written literature calls forth active imagination (because the reader is required to make his own visualisation). We have sought to contribute to the understanding both of the relationship and of the dichotomy between the two forms of expression.

Apocalypse Now was filmed with two possible endings. One version end with the explosive destruction of the island. The other, shown in Algeria, ends with the assassination of Kurtz. One wonders why the two endings were shot and projected separately.

What is sought in this study, is first to lift up Coppola's aims, and throughout the study to demonstrate how Coppola makes use of four primary literary sources (portions of the Bible, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1880), T.S.Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), and *The Hollow Men* (1929) in *Apocalypse Now* (1979). Coppola sought in that way to revitalise interest in written fiction. It is interesting to note the ricochet effect, as we become aware of Eliot's borrowing in *The Waste Land* of structural images from Weston's from *Ritual to Romance* (1920) and from Sir George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915).

Cinematic adaptation imposes some special constraints which have little or no importance in written fiction, such as time limits. One can put a book down and come back to it later, but a film must, as a general rule, be circumscribed in a time from not exceeding three hours. Economic and psychological considerations also provide constraints. At the same time, it must be recognised that the director takes a certain amount liberty of interpretation in the adaptation process. These liberties can be seen in the additional impact of photography, sound and musical scores, offering an atmosphere to underscore the written dialogue, tools which are not available to the author of written fiction, except as imaginary devices. These processes are not of necessity subjective, uniting personal experience and objective medium.

These influences, sources of what we call double alienation, are particularly evident in Coppola's work. Parallel examples are to be seen in Visconti', Kazan and Orson Welles.

1. THEORETICAL ISSUES

Within the Judeo-Christian Culture which is our frame of reference, at least three sub-cultures exist: oral, written and cinematic. We believe the three are inter-related. More often than not, they lead such artists as Francis Ford Coppola, T.S. Eliot and many others, filmmakers and poets, to conceive of their re-creation into a single, synthesised form. We have attempted to discuss this phenomenon using structuralism to help us de-construct such works of art as *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* a *structuralist* approach including readings of events by contemporary philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Michel Foucault, and, to a lesser has treated the role of print-culture. This would also justify our inclusion of Marshall McLuhan. We set forth the questions dealt with throughout the study, positing a comparison of Visconti, Kazan and Coppola as instructive examples. We have been concerned with the adaptation of many unified works into a different medium of expression of a non-written nature, in order to suggest our own de-construction and re-construction of the whole work. Our reference to some theoreticians reinforces our choice of a set of observations capitalised in arguments for consolidation. This is adequately summed up by David Lodge, when he offers the opinion that style is the very medium in which the subject is turned into art.

In addition to this, Michel Foucault's post-structuralist theory has enlightened our intention to see the outcome of our analysis not as the truth, but as a plausible reality. Marshall McLuhan, for his part, has demonstrated, in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, that the process of viewing and understanding films is one that needs as much scanning as literary scanning. Once more this borrowing has been necessary in order to scan *Apocalypse Now* segment by segment.

2. CONRAD IN VIETNAM

Among the many examples which illustrate Coppola's adaptation, let us have a look at the following remark made by Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*: "River like a snake uncoiled with its tail..." and its re-creation by Willard's voice-over in *Apocalypse Now*: "snaking like a main circuit cable plugging me straight into Kurtz." In both cases, we observe an itinerary from outside. Coppola knew how to give depth to his account, to such an extent that, very exceptionally, he could also adapt his themes to

commercial exigencies which usually require a story to have a beginning, a middle and an end. These are met by Coppola's borrowing of the theme of the voyage upriver from Conrad.

Throughout this work, the *intentionality* of these processes is indicated, relying on Notes on the Making of *Apocalypse Now*, in which Coppola himself indicates that *Heart of Darkness* provides the skeleton of *Apocalypse Now*.

Contemporary social forces, particularly the Vietnam phenomenon in the United States, in Coppola's mind, make an updating of the novel an imperative, and his metaphysical conclusions form the core of the film. They also give the framework within which one may analyse the process of adaptation. A complete shooting script of *Apocalypse Now* is furnished as well as a lexicon of technical terms and illustrations with the frames from the film. Although one could possibly consider inclusion of the shooting script to be somewhat fastidious, it is essential to provide a statistical basis on which to analyse Coppola's subjective orientations and statement about the characters involved. (See the Graphs based on shooting script data.)

3. COPPOLA'S USE OF THE SCRIPTURES

The very choice of the word "Apocalypse" is significant, and such scenes give content to the word. Apocalypse is a literary genre from which Coppola has borrowed the symbolic structure in order to reinforce his message. Apocalypse is Revelation, and Willard experiences the revelation of the personification of evil. Kurtz is a mystical figure in apocalyptic dimensions accentuated through the use of narration, photographs, tapes and files. The genius of Coppola in this respect lies in the fact that the Biblical atmosphere is actualised, updated through modern dialogues, costumes and accessories. A tape recorder and tapes become modern counterparts for the table of the laws of Moses. As Willard leaves the "sanctuary", he carries with him the tapes of Kurtz' Revelation.

The biblical episode of the Golden Calf is translated according to the details of *from ritual to Romance* (Weston) and *the Golden Bough* (Frazer). The scene is shot in such a way as to evolve a tribal ceremony, making a clear allusion to the Biblical episode of the Golden calf, constructed while Moses is receiving the tables of the Law.

Another frame of reference is the Apocalypses of Saint John, closing the New Testament. Willard's voyage is reminiscent of John's vision. Coppola sought, in each of his adaptations from the literary medium to the cinematic medium, to make an impact on his viewing audience, and through it on the general public. He saw this impact as being the same in the two media, but considered the latter to be more efficient and touching a wider audience.

The musical score of the film is of no minor importance. Francis Ford Coppola and his father, Carmine, collaborated in the composition, together giving emphasis to the written work on which the film was based. The music, far from being a simple accompaniment, helps to set the thematic issues. The soundtrack is every bit as important as the visual track. Both tracks form the atmospherical medium by which the message is transmitted. Music consolidates the organic ideas of the film, and cements them into an attractive, philosophical and well-balanced whole.

The themes of Family, Father and Son, Manliness, Macho Posturing, Respect, Loyalty, intimacy, protective Authority, Devotion and Assassination to be found in *the Godfather*, part II are at least partially replicated in *Apocalypse Now*. We find the notion of family developed in the relationships among Willard and his crew. The Chief assumes the father role, and Willard mentions a son in the closing dialogue with Kurtz.

4.T.S ELIOT AND MAN'S INVOLVEMENT IN HORROR, MADNESS

T.S. Eliot, widely reputed for his dealing with the modern man's sterility, gave the right content to Coppola's treatment of the American soldier during the Vietnam War. This part of our analysis shows the metaphysical aspect which emphasises man's involvement in madness, horror and darkness, which condemns humankind to penitence.

5. FILMIC ALLUSIONS IN APOCAYPSE NOW

Coppola was inspired by theoreticians and technicians of earlier times. He gave recognition to such people as Orson Wells, roger Corman, Cecil B.De Mille..He adopted the style, the methodology, and the basic rules of editing from people like Einstein and Pudovkin. He was inspired by more

contemporary, avant-garde filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard, all of whom served as models for Coppola, especially in so far as his integration of various technical devices is concerned. It is important to note that he relies on personal talent and cultural background, but also on previous successes of other people. Orson Welles attempted to make an adaptation of *Heart of Darkness* in 1936, but never produced it, primarily due to lack of financial resources. In 1941, he made *Citizen Kane*. Some visuals in *Apocalypse Now* were based upon Welles' based upon Welles's shooting script.

Other directors-from Griffith and Stoheim to John Ford and Stanley Kubrick are examined to demonstrate Coppola's debt to these filmmakers.

In one scene, Willard, played by Martin Sheen, meets Kurtz in a fashion reminiscent of Moses'going to the mountain to meet God, turning aside to contemplate the phenomenon of the burning bush which is not consumed by the fire. This worshipful scene is reconstructed and clothed in modern dress, using visual techniques borrowed from Cecil B. De Mille's *The Ten Commandments*. Other passages as well evoke the biblical Revelation. They are tellingly recreated through Coppola's masterful use of operatic techniques.

Coppola's keen admiration of Einstein is evident in the sequel movie, *the Godfather, part II*. He achieves highly elaborate counterpoints based on Eisenstein's pattern, moving judiciously from one character to another, from one period to another, from one incident to another. The similarities between Coppola's montage and Eisenstein's work is demonstrated in the action of the opening sequences of *Apocalypse Now*. Written fiction and cinematic fiction are nonetheless complementary. They can convey the same (or at least a comparable) message with the help of sometimes quite individualised means.

6. ICONS OF 20th MODERNISM

This part situates the concept of the literary sources. It explains the "modernist" status of the passages. It stresses the "Apocalyptic" presence and impact on Kurtz.

7. COPPOLA UNDERTAKES HIS OWN EPIC METAPHYSICAL "JOURNEY"

Our appraisal of the power of adaptation by a director like Francis Coppola has compelled us to refer, whenever appropriate, to his wife's comments on the making of *Apocalypse Now*. She followed the making of the film, noting every detail relative to the shooting. She wanted to make her own contribution to the production, and her notes formed the basis of a film about making the film. Her notes and the subsequent film offer a telling and reliable testimony on Coppola's motivations and intentions.

For her, "with his staff of hundreds of people carrying out his every request, **he was turning into Kurtz-going too far...**"

Coppola sought to examine war as multifaceted in order to pose the question of the moral issues behind all wars. The credits are projected on the pictures of the Apocalypse as collapse. This, too, tells us much about Coppola in metaphysical quest in the process of adaptation. The movement is centripetal. This is what Coppola means when he says that the film starts like a war movie and becomes metaphysical. A simple war movie depicts events and the people involved in them. The metaphysical experience of war seeks to define it as a universal manifestation of evil. Chef, played by Frederic Forrest, tells Willard that Kurtz is evil, and the photojournalist (played by Dennis Hopper) says that judgement of Kurtz surpasses the ordinary. The madman has expanded the mind of the photojournalist. What remains is emptiness, and darkness. One wonders also about the reasons behind the movement of the film, *Apocalypse Now*, from what begins as a straightforward violent war film through the metaphysical to arrive at what he calls the Vietnam of the Spirit. The answers to many of these questions are to be found in his very literary choices. They also lie in the fact that Coppola has deliberately chosen not to take a documentary approach to the Vietnam War, but chose instead to treat it as a metaphysical problem, the Vietnam Complex, which even today continues to overwhelm the collective conscience of the American people. As we understand this, we understand also Coppola's physical and spiritual stance. But **Coppola** undertakes his own "journey" - an epic metaphysical journey- becoming himself **Marlow/Willard and the project as Kurtz**, the nightmare of his choice.

Table of Values for the Hotel Room Episode in *Apocalypse Now*

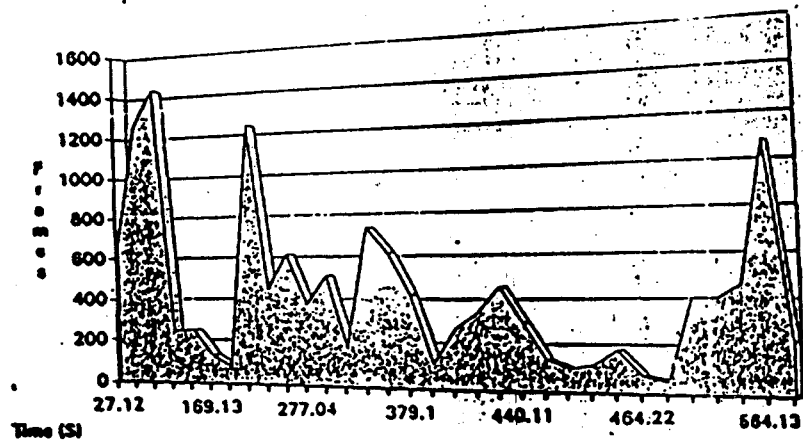


Table of Values for the First Photo-journalist Episode in *Apocalypse Now*

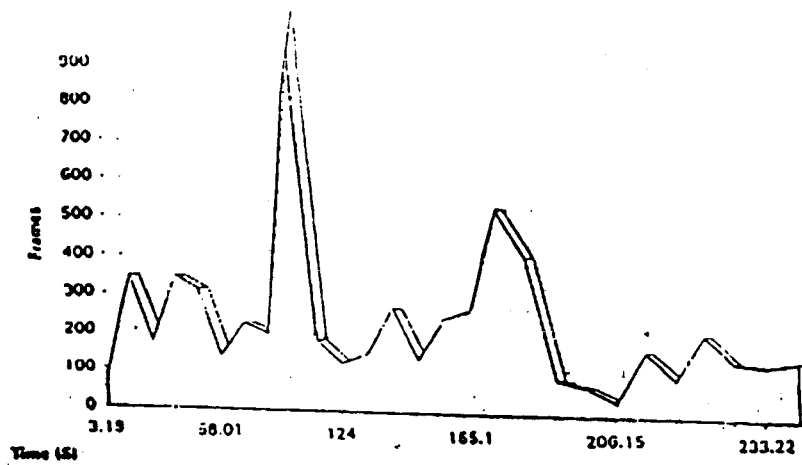


Table of Values for the First Photo-journalist Episode in *Apocalypse Now*

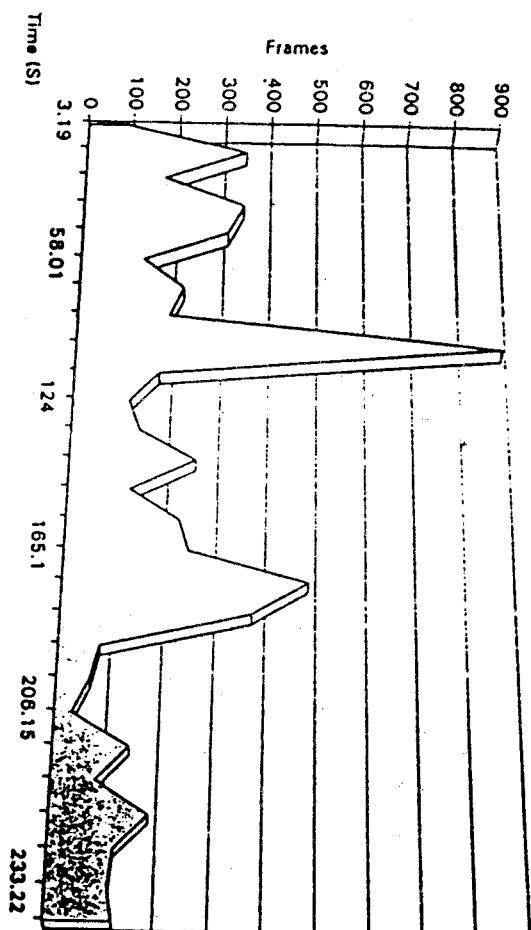
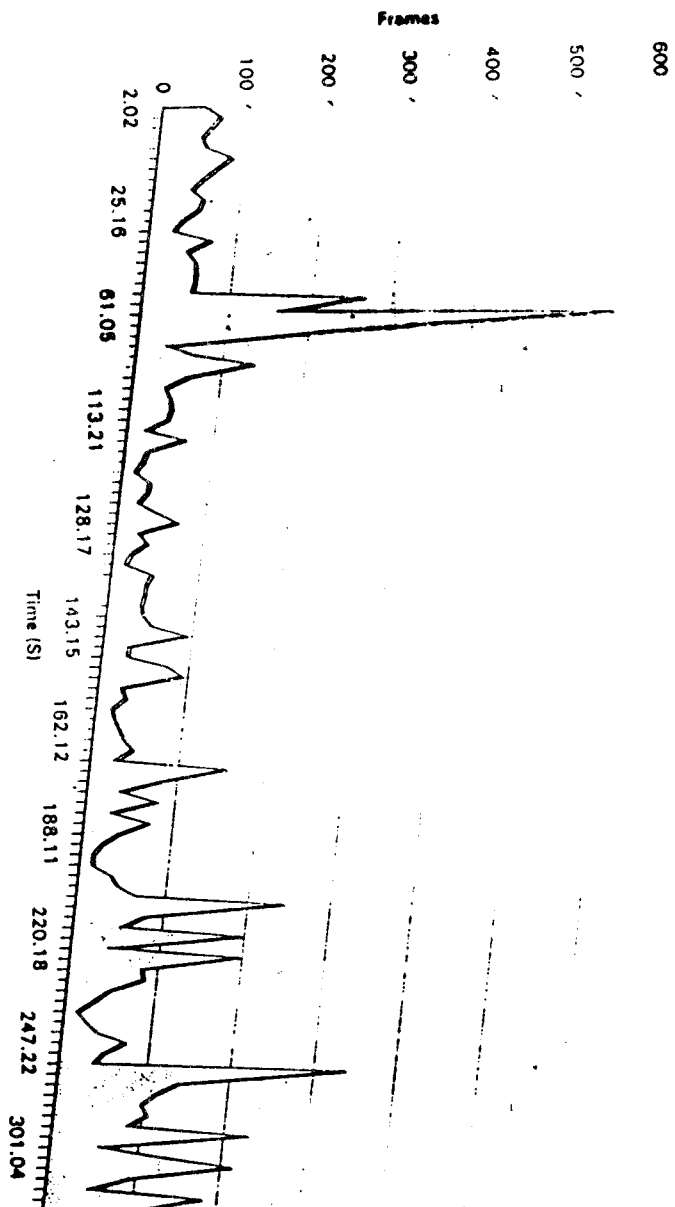


Table of Values for the Chopper Raid Sequence in Apocalypse Now



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Extract from the shooting script

47. The photojournaliste episode

Size of shots	Description Image/Sound	Time	Frames
Extreme Close up	Cage=Willard listening to the photojournalist chattering away Non-stop on location almost angry.	6.22	166
Medium shot	Cage-Willard+photojournalist Still chattering reverse angle shot	25.9	609
Extreme close shot	Cage= Willard upset	10.2	242
Extreme close shot	Cage= Willard; photojournalist	6.1	145
Extreme close shot	Cage= Willard	2.18	66
Medium shot Getting away	Cage= Willard photojournalist	9.11	227

Extract from the shooting script

23. THE HOTEL ROOM EPISODE:

Size of shots	Description Image/Sound	Time	Frames
Fade-in, Fade-out Extreme close-up	Willard's face	3.27	79
Fade-in, Fade-out Close up Superimposition Fire+face	Willard's face Like face of beast Eyes+darkness+ Forest+best in the jungle	51.14	1238
Fade-in, Fade-out Circular travelling	Willard's face, effect of spirale	18.17	449
Fade-in, Fade-out Panning left to right	Willard's in the frame.	25.12	612
Fade-in, Fade-out Zoom forward discovers	Window shot+blinds, camera Saigon(Street)	15.16	316
Fade-in, Fade-out Close-up	Willard looking through window, Voice-Over: "Saigon! (Expletives) I'm still only in Saigon !"	21.16	510

Extract from the shooting script

34. THE RIDE OF THE VALKYRIES SEQUENCE

Size of shots	Description Image/Sound	Time	Frames
Long shot Low angle shot	- Exterior, numeros Choppers Below sky (grey)	32	74

Long shot	Landscape: sea + land Foreground lance + blue sea	1.23	47
Medium shot	-Interior, Chopper:Clean+Chief + soldier + sea below	2.10	58
Medium shot	Soldier + Clean	2.12	60
Close up	- Chief praying	2.12	60
Medium	- Willard, Chopper on side+sea Below	2.10	58
Medium shot	- Chopper above + clouds + sky + sea + forest	1.14	258
Medium shot	Chopper landing sea below (grey) In crescendo still Wagner's the Ride of the valkyries	6.20	164