

## **Coping Strategies: Three Decades of Vietnam War in Hollywood**

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The Vietnam War represents a crucial moment in U.S. contemporary history and has given rise to the conflict which has so intensively motivated the American film industry. Although some Vietnam movies were produced during the conflict, this article will concentrate on the ones filmed once the war was over. It has been since the end of the war that the subject has become one of Hollywood's best-sellers. *Apocalypse Now*, *The Return*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Rambo* or *Platoon* are some of the titles that have created so much controversy as well as related essays. This renaissance has risen along with both the electoral success of the conservative party, in the late seventies, and a change of attitude in American society toward the recently ended conflict. Is this a mere coincidence? How did society react to the war? Do Hollywood movies affect public opinion or vice versa? These are some of the questions that have inspired this article, which will concentrate on the analysis of popular films, devoting a very brief space to marginal cinema. However, a general overview of the conflict itself and its repercussions, not only in the soldiers but in the civilians back in the United States, must be given in order to comprehend the between and the beyond the lines of the films about Vietnam.

Indochina was a French colony in the Far East until its independence in 1954, when the dictator Ngo Dinh Diem took over the government of the country with the support of the United States. The Vietcong, a communist party, soon began to oppose the dictator's policy and U.S. aid was required; promptly the troops arrived in a country against which war would never be declared. In 1963 Ngo Dinh Diem was assassinated and Nguyen Van Thieu succeeded him, after the coup d' état, as commander in chief of the South Vietnamese Army. The involvement of the American nation grew year by year, amidst a general approbation but that, little by little, turned into a bitter opposition. Two presidents, Johnson and Nixon, felt the effects of the social protest and a moral crisis was to overcome the country even when, in 1975, the last chopper left Vietnam.

In the late sixties the antiwar movement was holding together groups of people with nothing in common but the opposition to the intervention of the United States in the Far East. Neither an organized base nor an ideological consensus brought them together, but nevertheless demonstrations were being held all over the country. The last one, in April 24 of 1971, is still recorded as the largest one in U.S. history. Students for a Democratic Society, founded in the early sixties, was the organization that most passionately took on the task of protesting, provided that they had the time and the energy to devote to it; nonetheless, women, the blacks and the poor were the social groups in strongest opposition, owing to the fact that of them was demanded the greatest sacrifice. On the battle front desertions began to reach significant numbers in 1967. On the other side, pro-war groups were silent and scarce. Hollywood stars did not escape the social turmoil.

One of the primary purposes of the art work, in which I include motion pictures, is to entertain, a term that refers, according to Jerold M. Starrs, «to holding one's attention... provoking feelings and thoughts» (9,3). World War II originated hundreds of movies that, if not amusing, helped to create and maintain the necessary support. On the contrary, Vietnam's conflict did not produce many movies while the war was still going on. This could be explained by several major facts. First of all, a psychological reason lies behind the circumstance of unquestionable victory in all the international confrontations the U.S. had undertaken so far. Vietnam was tearing down a self-confidence in victory held by almost two centuries: back in the United States the lack of success in the battlefield was incredulously regarded. This leads to the second and most important reason that prevented film producers from investing in the subject: the division of public opinion. On the one hand, TV had substituted the function that motion pictures undertook during World War II and Korea. The daily TV coverage -which familiarized Americans with the horrors of the struggle, showed every night harsh images taken from reality, deprived of any romantic script or happy ending. This provoked a moral debate along with a profound ideological confusion; the undeclared war affected the audiences, and the studios could not take the risk of confronting the part of the public in disagreement with the point of view shown in the picture. On the other hand, young people

constituted the majority of movie-goers in the sixties and early seventies, as opposed to adults-who preferred TV. It was among those younger audiences that the antiwar movement was to be organized.

In addition to the reasons already mentioned, the Vietnam War is characterized very differently from other wars. Hollywood considered this simply another handicap to take into account. The «short-timer's mentality»<sup>1</sup>, the 19 years average as opposed to 25.8 in World War II, the increasing use of drugs in the battlefield, and the already mentioned gradual deterioration of the support back home implied the necessity of a new «filmic strategy» that filmmakers would be slow to discover<sup>2</sup>.

It is clear that all literature based on the theme of war, motion pictures included, is similar as they all deal with fear and death. However, this time very few people were clear on how to approach the theme. John Wayne was a pioneer in facing the difficult task of portraying the conflict and did it within a defined position in the movie *Green Berets* (1968). The first critical movies, however, would not be filmed until 1972: Elia Kazan's *The Visitors* stands as the first in a saga of movies all based on the return of the veterans. Nonetheless the general public rejected the subject until Coppola's production *Apocalypse Now* (1979), the film that registers the starting point of a new attitude toward the Vietnam War. As we move on, we will see how any kind of definition toward the «longest and most divisive war in U.S.A.'s history» (Starrs 12,3) has been and still is, at the least, problematic. In spite of the confrontation, the fact that the audiences showed a more receptive attitude caused the film industry to swerve and to mark the topic as an acceptable one. Although attempts had seldom been undertaken up to that date, they were enough to design a new filmic strategy and Hollywood gambled everything this time. Therefore, Vietnam turned into a more than profitable war subgenre and the Academy ensured its new position by giving several Oscars to Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978).

But Vietnam could not be approached anymore under the typical scheme of a war movie; on one hand, the sense of culpability had finally led to what has been named *historical amnesia*; on the other, the end of a war that officially never took place prevented the industry from addressing the core meaning of intervention. Films like *Rambo* re-cycled the former trauma into an action adventure in which an American hero was capable of changing history by himself. In a different mood, some movies adopted another tone in order to show «war as it really was»: Stone's *Platoon* or Kubrick's *Full Metal Jacket* are classified as realistic movies. Nonetheless, despite their controversial reception, they still avoid facing a political, or ideological inquiry. Finally, a new and astonishing approach appeared in the «Vietnam comedy» by Barry Levinson *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987). This is the summary of a long and painful process that requires a more thoughtful and calmer review. Let's start at the beginning.

## FILMS PRODUCED DURING THE WAR

The widespread feeling of culpability about an intervention very often judged as unfair, was the reason for a prudent silence in Hollywood during most of the conflict. As John Ellis points out, there are several consequences that define the act of attending a film projection. First of all, the cinematic identification that the dark environment, the still position in chairs placed in rows, and the resultant concentration in two senses -ear and eye- make feasible. Secondly, the spectator's separation from the image, which implies a kind of a «voyeurism», «a power over what is seen. Not the power to change it, but the knowledge that the actions... are played out for the spectator.. The characteristic voyeuristic attitude in cinema is that of wanting to see what happens, to see things unrolling» (45). Neither this «identification» nor the attitude of «wanting to see what happens» were what audiences could not, or seemed not, to look for in a movie theater for several years or, at least, the film industry judged it so. Given this predicament very few attempts were made during the sixties. Marshall Thompson's *A Yank in Vietnam* (1964) and *Commandos in Vietnam* (1965) are both movies inspired by a declared reactionism and produced minimal repercussions. As we have seen, John Wayne was next in an attempt to break the silence with a movie produced and directed by himself. *Green Berets* (1968) presents the war as a glorious crusade against communism. Fashioned in the style of 1949, the GI's mocked its many incongruities, remarked on by Martha Bayles: «the Vietcong attacking in formation,... the heroes escaping into the jungle via limousine, and a sun setting in the East»(30). The economic failure dissuaded Howard Hawks, the experimented director, from bringing into reality a project he had in mind. The scarcity of movies produced while the conflict was still going on, had a common characteristic: they would never show war as a central theme. According to Jose Enrique Monterde,

the main idea was, more than explaining or justifying what Americans were doing there, to diminish the importance of the conflict... to locate the war in a ground of fog, of a present but at the same time, distant nightmare (26).

Hollywood's reserve resulted in both a series of «B» productions, addressed to adolescents and the bursting of what one could call «militant» cinema. The latter resorted to the attitudes toward the war as well as to its repercussions. As far as the first issue is concerned, movies such as Nuchten's *The Cowards* (1969) and Brichen's *Explosion deal* with the refusal to recruitment; in both films, the main character flees to Canada in order to escape it, but neither one will achieve his purpose. David Miller's *Hail, Hero* (1969) presents a similar treatment of the topic, as do Brian de Palma's *Greetings* (1968) and Arthur Penn's *Alice's Restaurant* (1969). From another point of view the conservative *Two People* (Robert Wise, 1972) is filmed, in which the hero accepts the offer to return to the U.S. in order to be judged for his desertion. In addition to the topic of the recruitment, the problematic rejoining of veterans gave rise to several critical movies. Within the category one could name as «marginal», Robert Kramer's *The Edge* (1968) narrates the -fictional- murder of the U.S. President as expiation for the Vietnam carnage. Peter Watkins' *Punishment Park* (1971) shows the ruthless and implacable violence of government agents in the persecution of a dissident.

The most analytical and profound approaches to Vietnam, according to many critics, have been done under the works classified as «documentaries», from *A Face to War* (Eugene Jones, 1971) to *Vietnam! Vietnam!* (John Ford, 1971), along with foreign productions in which the Dutch Joris Ivens, the French Schoendorfer or the Studio Heinowski & Schumann are of outstanding importance. Regardless of their significance, the limits of space in the present review do not allow to carry out their study any further.

The last mention in the group of films made before 1975 comprises all those dealing with the war's psychological victims. In *Clay Pigeon* (Tom Stern and Lane Slate, 1973) a policeman awarded in Vietnam returns transformed into a «hippie»; *Skezeg* (Joel Freedman and Phil Messina, 1973) deals with drugs, meanwhile Bob Clark's *Dead of Night* (1974) narrates the story of the mother who cannot assimilate nor accept her soldier son's death. All three inform us about the wounds of war shown on a physical, mental or metaphysical (spiritual) level.

In 1975, the sudden ending of the war baffled this marginal cinema for a time; nonetheless, its presence became active again, carrying out what seems to be a proposal of oblivion in movies such as *Milestones* (R. Kramer and T. Douglas, 1975). The authors show how people of all kinds had to re-think their lives once the antiwar movement disappeared, mixing a melancholic feeling of farewell with images filmed by the authors in Vietnam in 1969. Nevertheless, the successive waves of veterans coming back home was going to interfere with this attempt.

## THE END OF THE WAR. HOLLYWOOD WELCOMES THE VETS

The cinema's perspective changed with the painfully present outcome of the war: thousands of ex-soldiers seeking to cure their wounds, receiving insults and rejection instead of the expected welcome rendered unworkable the proposal for oblivion. Marginal film-makers confronted it with a pacifist message: every one in the war has been as much a winner as a loser. They concentrated on the effects of the struggle on those who returned, avoiding a further inquiry into the reasons that determined the U.S. involvement. For this reason, most of the movies produced in this stage were not going to be located in the Vietnamese jungle but in the U.S. It is under these circumstances that Hollywood decides to define its position and, citing Monterde's words, «to exploit commercially the Vietnamese rich seam at the same time turning the losers into martyrs heroically sacrificed for the fatherland» (32)<sup>3</sup>. In this mood, named by M. Bayles as «healing process»(32) were filmed *The Deer Hunter* (Cimino, 1978) and *Coming Home* (Hal Ashby, 1978). Even though many critics have remarked that they tried to address the moral component of war itself, «to combine emotional catharsis with moral analysis»(Bayles 32) both of them skirt over the actual war, concentrating on the problematic re-adaptation of the ex-soldier.

*The Deer Hunter* contrasts the beauty and peacefulness of a quiet Pennsylvania town with the hell of the Vietnamese jungle, in which three friends are forced to confront the war's cruel madness. In Monterde's opinion, although the movie integrates both sides of the conflict -the battlefield and the rear-guard, the former appears in the middle of the projection as a nightmare that has to be forgotten and wiped away. In addition, the view of a Saigon corrupted by drugs and gambling does not succeed in counterbalancing the almost surrealistic scenes of the imprisoned soldiers, tortured and victimized, which is an historical distortion. Nick's burial, in one of the last scenes, conveys quite a clear message:

Americans must forget. Further on, a reading *beyond the lines* would illuminate a second and more subtle message, expressed through the horror scenes of torture --on which S. G. Freedman basically agrees. The Vietnamese communists are the ones who commit cruelties such as throwing a hand grenade into a bunker of women and children, so that the American soldiers are the victims: one of the heroes perishes and another loses his leg, but, as Freedman remarks, «the film ends not in sorrow but in affirmation, their friends singing «God bless America»(56). That is it: the war killed some soldiers but, at the same time, served to endure and reinforce the values and morale of the United States as a nation. In this sense it is a misleading work. Llinás emphasizes the contrast between De Niro's role, a perfect *superman*, and his humane friends, who are full of doubt and fear. Such a contrast, according to the critic, allows a facade of demythification which shelters a perfect complete mythical ideology, given the outstanding and spontaneous hero's performance. F. Ford Coppola, for his part, thinks of the movie as one dealing, not with the Vietnam War, but with World War II. The director declared in an interview that «despite the supposed realism, it does not have anything to do with the truth of Vietnam» (Hurtado 52)<sup>4</sup>.

*Coming Home* is the humanized counterpart to the surrealistic horror of *The Deer Hunter*. Directed by Hal Ashby, Jane Fonda and Jon Voight played the main roles. The latter uttered an antiwar speech, as a handicapped veteran, and the script was written by Waldo Salt, prosecuted during McCarthy's «Witch Hunting». The actress, known for several years as «Hanoi Jane» for her militancy in the antiwar movement, plays the role of an American soldier's wife. This is the reason why S. G. Freedman says that this movie «seemed a mea culpa for the excesses of the antiwar movement»(56). Fernández Torres essentially agrees: the anti-war message is nothing but a disguise to cover the ultra-conservatism of a movie «with progressive aspirations but, in the end, Hollywood films from head to foot» (Hurtado 55)<sup>5</sup>.

Certainly, the battlefield does not appear at all, in this melodramatic story of a *triangle amoureux*, and the setting in a hospital for Vietnam veterans isolates the American soldier as the sole victim of the war. He is worthy of respect in spite of the pity that he inspires at first, a respect that is reinforced by the fact that the heroine, Jane Fonda, does not achieve sexual satisfaction with her husband, but rather with the handicapped ex-soldier (Jon Voight).

As we can see, the volte-face arrived in 1979, when *The Deer Hunter* won the Academy award as best picture and Jon Voight and Jane Fonda the Oscars as best actor and best actress for *Coming Home*. Then, the well-known director Francis Ford Coppola announced the up-coming of his last film, *Apocalypse Now*. Suddenly, Vietnam had become fashionable.

*Apocalypse Now* (1979) was claimed to be the definitive film about Vietnam, regardless of its avoidance, once more, of any political analysis. Produced in the last months of the Carter Administration -quite discredited by that time- served to open a vivid debate in which Coppola's purpose was a main focus of controversy. Based on Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the script narrates Captain Willard's journey upstream, sent with a group of soldiers in a secret mission to destroy Colonel Kurtz; considered insane by the Army, he is entrenched in the deep jungle. As the story moves on, its characterization as a war movie fades away, becoming rather an inner reflection about the duality in humankind and the struggle between the rational and irrational, between bad and evil. The intimacy adopted contrasts with the spectacular *mise en scène*, describes by J. P. Shute as a «hallucinatory visual style that presents war as a bad acid trip» (84). The psychedelic imagery seems absurd: Wagner music during a helicopter attack, a firelight engaged to create a wave in which soldiers can practice surfing or a Play-Boy Bunnies show in the middle of the jungle. In some critics' opinion, this is a way to explain imperialist aggression, but it drastically sidesteps the ultimate category of analysis and all the references and hints seen in the film only leave us with a symbol, a representation -not an explanation- of evil. Among these critics, Braudy emphasizes the lack of political analysis; without judging Coppola's purpose, he states: «Like Martin Sheen contemplating Brando's Kurtz ...it seems easier to kill him off than to fathom its meaning» (20).

In contrast, other critics tend to see this ambiguity as one of the main values in the film. When Willard finally gets to meet him, Kurtz turns out to be not insane, but a warrior spirit who admires the enemy's capacity to commit atrocities «without passion, without judgment». S. G. Freedman thinks of these lines as the clue to understand the story, which reveals «the true face of North Vietnamese communism. By this light, *Apocalypse Now can be said to show the dawn fall of a great nation too civilized to prevail against a smaller but more barbarous enemy*»<sup>6</sup>. Bayles disagrees, by saying that Coppola's message goes far beyond, becoming a pacifist one when Willard finds in Kurtz's desk the note «Drop the Bomb Exterminate Them All!». In other words, there is no middle ground between half-measures and «total annihilation» (32).

In spite of many critics' judgment, that *Apocalypse Now* should be classified as a Vietnam movie -the definitive one, the only tragic one, others do not consider the movie to be related to the Vietnam War, nor even to war at all. And the author totally agrees with them. He declared in an interview that «Vietnam is just the set of a great drama conceived as a great medieval mystery play» (Hurtado 69)<sup>7</sup>. Coppola had thoroughly studied the movie *Hearts and Minds*, to the point that he categorized it as «political», but he never intended to create an imitations. Although the director's first thought was to include a «political» scene, he finally dismissed it, thinking of the film's purpose as something far beyond the category of a war movie. The film began in Vietnam, but the journey up the river is actually a mental journey searching for the origins, which Coppola conceives as inherently connected to the end. It is the end of an era which gives rise to a new origin and, in that sense, *Apocalypse Now* is an optimistic film. What is actually presented here about Vietnam is an invitation: «America, a certain America is dead...when something dies, there arise the conditions for a renaissance» (Kravetz 69), affirmed Coppola<sup>9</sup>. This clarifies the attempt on the part of the director, to avoid what he regards as useless argumentation, that of concentrating on a metaphysical representation of modern world.

Despite the former considerations, some critics think that it gives

a convincing image -condensed, distorted and hallucinatory of the specific of this war: ...the lack of a clear objective, the dead end in which the Americans got into, the hypocrisy with which it was presented to the public opinion... (Hurtado 85)<sup>10</sup>

They also regard the movie as deeply rooted in one of America's cinematic traditions, obsessed with violence and more concerned about the ethic and material consequences. Furthermore, it represents «the bad conscience of America, trying to understand why all this destruction» (Vidal 66)<sup>11</sup>. Finally, let's take Requena's opinion, who interprets the title as a reflection of the understanding -and acceptance- of a punishment ensuing from to the intervention. It is nothing else than an «apocalyptic» punishment, given the U. S. «supreme narcissism» (Hurtado 105) that «dares to call apocalypse to a political and military defeat... something which cannot be inscribed in history because it represents it own end» (105)<sup>12</sup>. Notwithstanding, nobody denies this film's influence in the panorama of the seventies, and with N. Vidal, one can say that Coppola's movie «summarizes a decade, the end of an era ready, as Willard is, to get rid of the past and assume the future» (63)<sup>13</sup>.

Before leaving this phase, let's comment on the indescribable role that sound-track played in all the seventies movies, which used the sixties' music as an effective background. The Doors sing «The End» as Napalm ignites a jungle in *Apocalypse Now* and in *Coming Home* Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Simon and Garfunkel among others serve as the musical background. There are also some remarkable movies in this phase: *Heroes* (1977), *Rolling Thunder* (1971), *The Ninth Configuration* (1979) and, above all, *Go Tell the Spartans* and *The Boys in Company C*; both of them were filmed in 1978 and portray a mixture of war's horror and the military routine. Despite these two last names, what is clearly defined as the most characteristic feature of this decade is that filmmakers tended to depict, more than the war itself, the psychologically troubled characters back at home.

#### THE DEFINITE TURNOVER IN THE EIGHTIES: RAMBO'S STATEMENTS

Meanwhile, America was beginning to turn to the right. Along with Ronald Reagan's electoral victory the United States started a new phase, a period of reaffirmation of national pride reflected in the many attempts to recover traditional *grandeur*, from the celebration of the Statue of Liberty anniversary to the use of full-dress in presidential ceremonies. The U.S. intervention in Vietnam, for its part, was still a field of on-going cultural and political concern, and the above described political ambiance favored the rehabilitation of the veterans and the acceptance of the war itself. As Freedman has pointed out, «it is difficult to say which came first-the conservative upsurge or the rehabilitation of the Vietnam veteran- but each trend nourished the other» (55). Notwithstanding, the view of the war propounded by this is dramatically different from the one that gave the antiwar movement in the sixties and early seventies. We will realize that the term rehabilitation is the key word to understand the attitude of the film industry -as well as the general artistic world in the eighties. At the most extreme, the Vietnam veteran will come into the art world as a hero. Movies such as *Missing in Action* (part I and II), *Uncommon Valor* or *Rambo* illustrate this first drive. Studlar and Desser have named this trend as «rightwing revisionism» (11). In a lower scale of mythification, veneration for the Vietnam veteran depicts a second and more realistic strain. *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket* are two controversial movies inscribed within this second group in the eighties.

The conservative part of society which felt the defeat in Indochina was a humiliation, was taking its turn and the need of reconstituting a good image was now going to prevail. The critics Studlar and Desser name this purpose as the «re-writing» of history, comparing the resultant attitude to that shown in the postwar Japan and Germany. In order to rewrite the Vietnam episode, American society had to confront some questions about the reasons that led the U.S. to the intervention. It is not a unique opinion of these critics that these questions could not be answered without the admission of guilt. That is why, as we have seen, even the seventies' more «critical» films avoided any political declaration about the defeat and, much less, about the feeling of guilt that seems to have been hovering over American society since the sixties<sup>14</sup>. The reason for this is that guilt is not an easy feeling to accept. It has to be transformed, and movies are as good a means as any political discourse.

The mechanism most commonly used, always according to Studlar and Desser, is that of *victimization*, because «to be a victim means never having to say you are sorry» (11). First of all one has to change such knotty questions as «Were we right to fight in Vietnam?» into a more acceptable one, like «What is our obligation to the veterans of war?» Then, the change of aggressors into victims will be just the next step. It was also used in Germany, and the visit that President Reagan paid to Bitburg cemetery seemed to sanction this new attitude<sup>15</sup>.

An article published in *The Wall Street Journal* claims against all those movies that characterize the Vietnam Veterans as a «legion of losers» (Lane 120); another critic emphasizes Hollywood's injustice to the veterans, welcoming those films produced to just «acknowledge the sacrifices made by young Americans in Southeast Asia» (Szamuely 53). Apparently, it was the time to re- take Wayne's attempt, to revitalize the hearty patriotism shown in *Green Berets*. It was also the time for William Alexander to say «There is a need to show we have the will and the character we had before Vietnam... a need to re-think ourselves to the basic American good guy»<sup>16</sup>. Ted Kotcheff's *Uncommon Valor* is a movie that subscribes to this conservative view of the war, representing the vanguard that claims the American rightness in undertaking this action. The father of a M.I.A., determined to rescue his son many years after the end of the war, enlists his son's Marine friends to help him in the mission. «There is a lot of unfinished business over there», he tells them. This time, soldiers are fighting on the right side, as their leader confirms: «No one can dispute the rightness of what you are doing». American intervention, definitely, was not only moral and justified. It has also become a noble action.

*Rambo* (1985) is the movie that better resumes this attitude. Directed by George Pan Cosmatos, it is the continuation of *First Blood* (Ted Kotcheff, 1982): John Rambo, a Vietnam veteran, is hassled by the sheriff of a small town until the «highly trained» soldier explodes in a bloody act of revenge. In the second part, Rambo -who has been judged and imprisoned as a common criminal, is required to go back to Vietnam in order to find and photograph some American imprisoned soldiers -POWs. When Rambo successfully returns with an American soldier, the rescue helicopter hovers over them as the enemy approaches and, suddenly, Murdock -the government agent- aborts the mission and the helicopter leaves. Rambo is imprisoned and tortured but, finally he manages to escape. Conceived as a Comic book hero, all muscles and oil, this «superman» does not only conquer the enemy in the jungle by himself, but he is also able to overcome all the obstacles. His fight is legitimized as opposing a cruel enemy that *still* holds American prisoners. His fight, as related to both ungrateful superiors and ruthless enemies, has made of him -of the American soldier in Vietnam, a victim.

The extreme violence of this film starts in the first twenty minutes and increases as the movie goes on; a rate of more than one death per minute results in more than one hundred deaths in ninety eight minutes of film. Leguineche, a Spanish reporter during the Vietnam War, provides a point of view from which one can look at the process of victimization: the film's catholic iconography. Johnny's headband, long hair, nude torso and suffering look provides an adequate imagery of the new Savior. -Rambo, as Jesus Christ, is a victim; he has been rejected and despised by his society; he accepts, nevertheless, to fight - once more- for it. The only difference is that the new savior is not going to die. Studlar and Desser, on their part, relate this iconography to the native American Indian, the «romanticized victim of past government deceitfulness disguised as progress» (14). So that, Rambo also stands as the figure of the noble savage, who prefers the bow and arrow and feels at home in the mud and waterfalls of a wild jungle, because he is pure, superior to technology.

This film justifies not only the war, but also the means of the intervention: it emphasizes some tortures that if in the movie are protagonized by the Vietcong soldiers, in the sixties and seventies the organization of international rights attributed to the American army. The Vietnamese appear as dirty, sweaty, cruel and lascivious... they are even inferior to the demanding Russian advisors. They are subhuman, «gooks» living in a jungle that is «an unredeemable hell which automatically refutes any

accusation of America's imperialist designs» (Studlar and Desser 14)<sup>17</sup>. There is no doubt of the existence of a political message.

The coarse and vulgar parallel between this representation of the new almighty hero and the Christian or Indian imagery does not represent according to Ángel Fernández Santos, a carelessness conception. It rather attaches closely the Goebbels propaganda's theory: the more obvious and elemental, the more effective the message is. As the critic points out, Rambo's producers did not intend an adventure movie, «but a film, which appearance of adventures, hides an ideological relief» (31)<sup>18</sup>. Stallone and Cosmatos brought to the above mentioned conservative sectors a consolation: if victory could not be achieved in the battlefield, the screen will serve to relieve the bitterness as an «illusory and balsamic revenge»(Fernández Santos 31). Some popular magazines in the United States as *The New Yorker* or *The Wall Street Journal* criticized the movie's «narcissistic chauvinism». Stallone, on his part, judges the movie neither on the right side, nor the left, but he sees it as representing «ordinary people». The immediate success seems to sanction this affirmation: in less than six weeks *Rambo* had collected more than \$230,000 and «Rambo style» articles were sold everywhere. In a certain beach, a helicopter was dragging as sign: «Relax, Rambo takes care of you», while the President of the United States, during a conference about the crisis of the TWA hostages, joked: «After watching *Rambo*, I know how to act»<sup>19</sup>.

In spite of the existence of another Vietnam, the one depicted in Joris Ivens documentaries or in the Hanoi studios, Hollywood has known how to take advantage of the turnover, «has been able to transform the shameful military defeat into an heroic saga» (Hurtado 12)<sup>20</sup>. That is, the veteran is now depicted as not only a hero, but a very special one who fought for an ungrateful country. The image of this hero confronting a dreadful enemy on behalf of a government he distrusts is another characteristic of this new conception. Rambo asks Colonel Trautman when he is released from prison: «Are they going to let us win this time?». The hero is illustrating President Reagan's strategy of blaming on other former politicians- for the defeat in Vietnam<sup>21</sup>.

Finally let's discuss the visual spectacle of *Rambo: First Blood Part II*. Studlar and Desser emphasize «the film vocabulary for exercising the will to myth»(15). In this movie, the spectacle becomes the super-body of Stallone, constantly enhanced by the movement of the camera. Although Rambo says that «the mind is the best weapon», his *hyper masculinity* does not accompany such a statement. Ellis has pointed out how the camera shows Rambo holding «his machine gun where his penis ought to be»(15). A great spectacle, because «the male body as a weapon functions as a bulwark against feeling of powerlessness» (Studlar and Desser 15).

All the components that have been named help to understand *Rambo: First Blood Part II* as another attempt to confront the Vietnam War. Its messages are clear behind its subtle mechanisms. Violence, victimization, individuality and glamour are the response to an experience that, despite Johnny-Superman efforts is still shown as traumatic. No progression has been made since the sixties: not in vain Stallone has been named the Duke's heir.

A very different approach has been made with *Platoon*, a very controversial movie. Filmed in 1986 by the ex-combatant Oliver Stone, its plot gives the spectator an inside view of the war from the College student Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen), a young recruit, arrives to a platoon engaged in a «search-and-destroy» mission near the Cambodian border in 1969. The soldiers seem to be divided into two camps; on one side are the followers of brutal Sergeant Barnes (Tom Berenger), a tough man who complains constantly about the restrictive rules of the military, drinks and kills Vietnamese people in cold blood. On the other, the civilized Sergeant Elias (Willem Dafoe) is disillusioned with the war and smokes pot. The final confrontation takes place during an interrogation of Vietnamese peasants. The next day, Barnes murders Elias. Chris has also become disillusioned and, knowing the truth, decides to kill Barnes. At the end, when the platoon has been overrun by the communists, Chris returns back home. His last thoughts while leaving the battlefield are, in a voice-over: «We did not fight the enemy, we fought ourselves-and the enemy was in us.» Oliver Stone explained when he accepted his Oscar -the movie received four of them- that his purpose was to prevent the occurrence of another tragedy like Vietnam.

The movie has been claimed to be «apolitical», but Szamuely argues avidly against such an occurrence: showing the American soldier's smoking pot, falling asleep on guard duty or running away from the enemy is a very clear, as well as a subtle, political statement. Although many critics have emphasized the struggle between Elias and Barnes as a symbol of the duality, the struggle between good and evil in every man, Szamuely reduces it to a very specific message: the good side, represented by Elias, is the antiwar attitude, the rejection of the American intervention. In addition, the guys in the platoon are those nobody cares about. From this point of view, despite Szamuely's interpretation, the movie assumes one of the statements of *Rambo*: there is a resentful and embittered look about the veterans. However, in *Platoon* they are not heroes anymore, but rather victims of a ghastly mistake. Here we find again the

strategy of victimization, from where one can deduce that in Stone's film, in spite of its appearance, there is not such an antithetical issue as one would have thought at first sight. *Platoon* goes so far as to transpose the conflict from the specificity of Vietnam into the realm of the transcendental, since, the fight between Barnes and Elias has been seen as a mythical symbol of good and evil struggling for Chris' s soul. Martha Bayles also judges this movie to be to the left of the mainstream. According to her, Stone's message is that communism had nothing to do with the American involvement. She recalls Chris's last thoughts -«We did not fight the enemy...», to give an interpretation of the movie as conveying the final statement «we were destined to lose because this war had no moral purpose and it was fought without any moral integrity» (33). In an interview, Stone's declarations seem to confirm the former insight: «There was a lack of moral purpose... all of us tried just to survive» (Hurtado 48).

On the other side, many critics applaud *Platoon's* rejection of the glamorization of war used in films like *Rambo*, as well as its unsparing realism. These critics judge as positive the fact that the enemy is rarely shown and, if so, is presented as inoffensive civilians. The fact that Oliver Stone did not count on many sources to produce the movie -the major studios rejected the project- provoked a special effect: the war is suggested more than clearly seen. The director affirms in an interview conducted by Fietta Jarque that his intention was to make a realistic movie, different from the spirit of *Rambo* or *Top Gun*, the most popular movies in 1985 and 1986<sup>22</sup>. The script was written in 1976, but he felt content for having directed this movie in 86, given the new American militarism in Grenada, Beirut, Tripoli and Central America, as he also declares in the same interview. Nevertheless, the director never intended to make a «political» movie. To account for this purpose, he cut off a scene in which Chris asks: «Are we going to win this war?» and Elias responds in great disillusionment «I used to think so, but now ...I don't know.» Stone believes that it was sufficient to show «what happened, and let people draw their own conclusions»(Kroeger 78). Nonetheless, he had formerly made a combative statement with Salvador and now, in *Platoon*, one of the main characters declares that the film «is a statement of principles about the war and the people who fight in them»(Kroeger 79)<sup>23</sup>. Several critics, on their part, have remarked that *Platoon* is something more than a movie about war and Germán Sánchez goes even further when he states that Stone's movie retakes Conrad's fiction.

Generally interpreted as having a denouncing tone, the film still makes use of the Manicheism of good and evil. According to Vicente Romero, a journalist during the Vietnam War, American soldiers are always victims and the assassins in the platoon appear to be a consequence of the system (43). In spite of all the controversy about the existence -if any- of a political statement in this film, it has already won the respect of the critics and many awards. This is a revealing fact: the film cannot represent a very critical point of view, since, as Alberich points out, «the officer corps, no need for explanation, is not and will never be revolutionary» (Hurtado 66)<sup>24</sup>. The same critic cannot avoid the feeling that, stressing the premiere of a certain film, the film industry is perhaps deliberately disregarding «the version which the director of *Paths of Glory* [Stanley Kubrick] may offer on this subject, mitigate its possible repercussions or, at least, provoke a previous exhaustion in its future spectators» (Hurtado 66)<sup>25</sup>.

*Full Metal Jacket* (1987) is the least awarded and commented film by Stanley Kubrick. Based on *The Short Timers* of which the film-maker liked all the roughness of language and facts, Michael Herr co-wrote the script with its author Gustav Hasford. The movie is neatly divided into two parts. The first one shows the training of young recruits in a U. S. Marine Corps boot camp in North Carolina. The drill sergeant directs a process of brutalization of the soldiers, starting by closely shaving their heads. One of them, Private Pyle, goes progressively insane until he kills himself, after having shot his sergeant. The second half of the film shifts to Vietnam, a ruined city during the Tet offensive -Kubrick re-created the Vietnam jungle in a semi-demolished part of London that, because of the cold light and ambiance, has provoked the critique of some writers. The recruits arrived in the middle of a deadly sniper fire. When Cowboy, the best friend of the protagonist, Private Joker (Mathew Modine) is killed, the patrol chases the sniper, who turns out to be a girl. She is in agony and begs Joker to shoot her; after hesitating -he had never killed before, he does it. He finally joins the others, who are marching and singing the Mickey Mouse song, while in a voice-over the spectator hears: «I'm in a world of shit... yes. But I am alive. And I am not afraid.»

The film has received very hard critiques in the United States. Everyone agrees on the clear evidence of Jungian psychology in the film. Private Joker is the symbol of the Jungian duality as shown by the inscription written on his helmet «Born to Kill» and the peace anagram hanging from his neck. Many critics also agree on the characterization of *Full Metal Jacket* as not being a movie about the Vietnam War. Gorina says that the film «is not a film» about the Vietnam War. I say it is so as the *The Birds* might be considered an ornitological treatise»(Hurtado 51 )<sup>26</sup>. Nonetheless, Herr specifies the



purpose that led Kubrick in this film: «One of the reasons why he wanted to direct a war film was the feeling that, up to that time, nobody had done it correctly» (Hurtado 39)<sup>27</sup>.

Pérez de Arteaga remarks how boredom has probably been one of the main reasons why the movie was not welcomed in the United States, but rather the negative opinions attributed to Kubrick do not reflect such a boredom, but an open refusal. Szamuely does not understand the inexplicable transformation of the blindly obedient young killers into an «ill-disciplined, incompetent, dim-witted lot» (53). Bayles, on her part, interprets Kubrick's message as «war- weary cynicism of grunts... [expressing] radical anti-Americanism»(34). Kubrick is not even coherent since, according to her, the black nihilism of the book on which the movie is based appears in the film only to a certain degree. The director does not want to risk benefits, so that, when Cowboy dies, Kubrick did not represent the book's scene -Private Joker refusing to rescue his comrade, who writhe in a clearing among several corpses- but he enhanced the heroism of a Marine who risks his own skin by trying to rescue his friend. Herr defends Kubrick: «I think that nobody knows what the public wishes to see. And I don't think the public knows this better .» (Hurtado 39)<sup>28</sup>. However, Bayles does not find any positive value in Kubrick's last production: «By presenting heroism in a radically anti-war context... *Full Metal Jacket* shrinks the moral component of the Vietnam tragedy to the unproblematic morality of buddy helping buddy»(34). Meanwhile, Szamuely accuses the movie of presenting,

the American side as irredeemably bad... Second, its theme is not the usual one of the malign influence of the war on the American character, but rather the opposite, the malign influence of the American character on the war.(53)

The critique of J. Shute emphasizes on its part the cool irony that hindered Kubrick from achieving an acceptable outcome, although she defines it as «the most complex and analytic of these Vietnam movies [those produced in the eighties]» (84) and she judges as positive the fact that it is «concerned with dismantling myths rather than rehabilitating them» (84). The part of the film in which the soldiers are interviewed for what they call «Vietnam- The Movie» left out any political statement and so it loses all the possibilities of becoming the definitive Vietnam movie. The Spanish writer Fernández Santos agrees with this opinion, maintaining that cynicism and pervasive irony is what remains. In contrast, Michel Herr affirms that *Full Metal Jacket*,

suggests that there is more to say about the war than just state that it is a bad thing. The Vietnam War was, of course, a tragic mistake from the beginning, but I think it has taught us something useful. If this war had not taken place, we would probably be fighting in Nicaragua... The theories at that time, as that of the dominoes, won't be of any use in the future. (Hurtado 39)<sup>29</sup>.

Music plays an important role in *Full Metal Jacket*. The director reviewed the hits from 1962 to 1968 and chose the songs which best fit the different scenes. «Those Boots Are Made to Walk», «Woolly Bully» and «Surfing C' Bird» are some of the titles used by Kubrick to emphasize the euphoric state that soldiers have during the combat, «which we can observe in the marine's face when he shoots at the people getting out of the building; he does not hit the first four , waits for a music beat and then shoots down the other two» (El Globo 77)<sup>30</sup>. Rock'n'roll is one of the main features to remember in Vietnam; as M. Herr war journalist as well as the script writer of the movie says, «one of the memories I have of Vietnam is the continuous presence of rock'n'roll» (Hurtado 40)<sup>31</sup>. Kubrick's main purpose was to reflect the war, avoiding the political inquiry. This reason led him to choose *The Short Timers*: «The book doesn't offer any easy moral solution, it is neither for nor against the war. It seems to be only concerned with the reality of events»(Hurtado 39)<sup>32</sup>. This seems to reflect Kubrick's policy about the task: war is not a spectacle and he wants to portray it as something real not only concerning the stage but also the minds and the feelings. One of his characters expresses this philosophy when he says that not to see «spilled guts, but to see human beings clearly, that is ugly».

In 1985, Hollywood began to consider again the revision of the Vietnam conflict. If Cimino's main metaphor was Russian roulette, Coppola's a bad acid trip and Stone's a morality play, then Kubrick's cool irony turned up what was left of the once-valid myths and fables. But all of them showed a stereotypical situation that did not always coincide with the veterans' opinions. William K. Lane Jr., one of the thousands of soldiers who fought this war, expresses in the *Reader's Digest* his disagreement with the Hollywood vision of Vietnam in these terms, «I've met thousands of Vietnam vets over the years, and I've yet to encounter one who fits the prevailing stereotypes» (120). He continues discussing the main drawbacks that Hollywood movies contained in their consideration of «Some of the bravest and best men

who ever wore an American uniform» (120), as he criticizes the influence of mass-media on public opinion regarding the human element of the Vietnam War: «They [the veterans] deserve better than to be caricatured by Hollywood and the media as a legion of losers» (120).

As we have said, the eighties have witnessed an ostensible project of demythification as opposed to the seventies' historical amnesia, which tended to show the grandeur of the American myth of glory and heroism, as well as the view of the American soldier as a «savior» who would preserve freedom and democracy all over the world. Comedy is a genre, as we know, very rarely used to confront the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, Dave Troy, a veteran of Vietnam, recently declared in the *New York Times Magazine* that «fear is the greatest source of comedy, I don't bottle the war up. If I had, I would have exploded»(Norman 69). Barry Levinson seems to share this point of view, as we can see in his production of *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987). This film represents a new turning point in Hollywood. We might however consider Robert Altman's *M.A.S.H.* (1970) as its most obvious antecedent in the sixties. Although this first comedy dealt with the Korea War, the ironic tone may be regarded as very close to the almost jocular tone in *Good Morning Vietnam*.

Adrian Cronauer, an American disc-jockey who joins the Army in 1965, is sent to Saigon in order to make a radio program for the American troops. His official purpose is to maintain the moral high in the American forces. The soldier must be entertained between his long periods in the frontline that may possibly lead to his death in a foreign country, and having no clue whatsoever about the reasons of his being there.

According to Antonio Castro, the year 1965 was the main turning point in the Vietnam conflict:

1965 was the year of the war escalation, the crucial year in which what was supposedly a small contingent of men struggling to prevent the country from falling into the communist hands, passed -by will of President Johnson- to become an open conflict where the U.S. assumed again its police stand and supposed defender of the free world, while actually concealed the defence of the more powerful nation in the world (Castro 60).<sup>33</sup>

When Cronauer arrives, he is completely unaware of the Vietnamese people, and the proportions of the conflict that is already taking place. His problems start when he realizes that most of the radio news is being manipulated in the Asian Southeast<sup>34</sup>. From then on he will try to change his attitude towards the radio, that is to say, he will inform the soldiers of the reasons for their being there, as well as the overall evolution of the conflict. This change of position is going to be determined by three main issues: the commonly accepted racism of the American people toward the Vietnamese; the stupidity of the military class -that Cronauer has concluded after his experience there; and above all, his recent realization of the occupied country, when he becomes friend with some Vietnamese students such as Tuan and Trinh, through his teaching of English four-letter words. Shute states that there is a reminiscence of heroism, when Cronauer «resists his immediate superiors in order to tell the 'truth' about the war» (85). As a result Cronauer is sent to death by his major sergeant Dickerson, when he decides that he should go through a route under the control as the Vietcong. Thanks to his Vietnamese friend Tuan, he manages to return alive. Martha Bayles affirms that Cronauer's popularity arises from the fact that «he represents the very best America has to offer in 1965: not freedom, not democracy, but rock'n'roll»(33). Shute agrees with this picture of paternalism, and goes even further when she qualifies this statement as conveying an implicit sense of paternalism, «the smug condescension implicit throughout is epitomized in Cronauer's tone when he discovers that a Vietnamese friend is a 'terrorist' »(85), because he will act as a suffering and comprehensive father who has been betrayed by his beloved kid. Castro believes that *Good Morning Vietnam* poses some crucial problems, and questions many of the attitudes taken for granted without a critical consideration. The critic finally writes,

Curiously enough, the film achieves its goal of stressing the seriousness of the subject using a rather humorous approach. The dramatic backcloth of the Vietnam War gathers all its strength by way of contrast to the funny program that Cronauer must do. The film humor therefore springs from the lack of adaptation of the characters to the situation in which they find themselves (Castro 61).<sup>35</sup>

As Bayles states, Hollywood personifies once again the national character in a stereotypical individual, the rebel, but good, American guy, Cronauer. There is no doubt that the treatment is now different: a comedy about the Vietnam War. Shute has pointed out however that the main point of the film is the exculpation of the American role in Vietnam. Furthermore, she says that the ultimate message of the film is to depict the war as a «big joke,» in which decent people were participating. In other words, a

serious analysis, the so-called political inquiry -already mentioned in this essay- still remains to be done. At last she writes that, «any serious attempt to grapple with Vietnam has tacitly been abandoned. Shame and stylistic tact have yielded to shamelessness» (85).

## CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to review in a general way some of the films produced in the United States about the Vietnam War. There are two ways to form an educated opinion on the subject. The first approach would be to consider the acceptance or refusal of a certain movie by the public, a subject I regard as a task more appropriate for a sociological study. The second, equally valid, is an analysis of the movies themselves that have been produced by the American film industry. This is the approach that I have chosen. Many critics point out the absence of political inquiry in all the art-works about Vietnam. This is what, in the first place, isolates Vietnam movies from what should be their natural classification: the war genre. Secondly, this avoidance also determines a new style in which war is depicted in realistic detail. The action is fragmented and the dialogue riddled with American black patois, pidgin Vietnamese and military jargon. The movies subscribing to this category present an outraged realism that often becomes absurd and surrealistic. Finally, this avoidance of political explanations has provoked a particular progression divided into quite clear phases that this essay has tried to elucidate.

The sixties were characterized by the lack of attempts, followed by the prevailing antiwar philosophy of the seventies and the rehabilitation of the eighties. However, all these three phases have a common denominator: the apolitical outlook has prevailed over any other approach, concentrating on the experience of the American soldier both in the battlefield and back at home. Oliver Stone, Stanley Kubrick and Coppola deliberately avoided analysis of the war theme or any kind of political approach in their movies. The latter explains this refusal based on the awareness that popular filmmakers have of his power over general public's opinion: «Cinema is powerful... all we believe, our idea of good and evil, our likings, our language, are all shaped by the mass- media»(Hurtado 51)<sup>36</sup>. In addition, general audiences had little desire to see more of what they were already viewing every day in the news. On the other hand there also appeared to be an amazing oblivion regarding the war, that which Freedman considers to be «deliberate escapism»(54). A prudent silence was kept once the involvement was generally accepted as a mistake and filmmakers also assumed this attitude. Adopting a similar attitude, Howard Hawks abandoned his project after seeing John Wayne's failure, and Cimino or Ash by skipped any direct confrontation with the public. Regardless of the apparent antiwar statements of their movies, they do not concentrate on anything except the problems of the readjustment of the veterans.

The conservative policy of Reagan offered yet a new way of looking at the Vietnam War. On the one hand that of blaming others for the defeat -a defeat that was never explicit, and on the other the creation of a hero. That hero was based on the Vietnam veteran as «the soldier» and took two extremes of form, either the one depicted in the fantastic mood of Cosmatos' cartoonish «superman» or the more realistic one presented by Stone or Kubrick. *Rambo* is an important film that has resulted from the conservative upsurge. What Fietta Jarque names the «childish conservatism» of the Reagan era has restrained to a considerable extent the criticism shown in *The Deer Hunter* and *Coming Home*<sup>37</sup>. However, a closer look at these films would permit us to discover that, if *Rambo* offers victory in combat, *Coming Home* offers also victory ...at home. In spite of the unquestionable mistake of their being there, these movies never show the Vietnamese side. «There was clearly greater suffering by the Vietnamese. They were being napalmed. They were having their culture destroyed», says Baranik, an American World War II soldier<sup>38</sup>. But Hollywood has preferred not to touch the subject yet. Instead, American soldiers portrayed as victims continue to be the protagonists. No doubt they were brave and they also suffered -all wars cause grievance-, but this does not justify a superficial approach to the conflict as in *Coming Home* or *The Deer Hunter*, a portrayal of the war as spectacle without concrete conclusions as in *Apocalypse Now*; an attempt to change history, as in *Rambo*, or the view of the war as a Manichean conflict between good and evil in man. In spite of all its bad reviews, I regard *Full Metal Jacket* as the best approach to the war. From *Good Morning Vietnam*, however, a new issue has been opened: the war was treated as a joke. «Laugh and the ghosts will go», is -apparently- the message. Humor seems to have helped people deal with the guilt. The past cannot be changed through feeling guilty, neither by laughing at the horrors. The movie industry has made several attempts to heal, the psychological conflict. Nevertheless it is obvious that for Americans the Vietnam phantasm has not been exorcised.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES:

- (1) The service in Vietnam was classified as «Military Service». It was volunteer and the government reduced to one year the period of time in order to encourage recruitment.
- (2) According to Monterde and Riambau, in 1970 the Pentagon declared that 60% of the American army in Vietnam was intoxicated (*Op. cit.*, p. 31)
- (3) For practical reasons, Spanish and French references have been all translated into English. (My own translation). However, I always refer to the original quotes in the notes. In this case, the original quote is, "explotar comercialmente el filón vietnamita al mismo tiempo que convierte a los perdedores en mártires sacrificados heroicamente por la patria».
- (4) Original quote: "A pesar del supuesto realismo, no tiene nada que ver con lo que pasó en Vietnam».
- (5) Original quote: "con pretensiones progresistas pero, en definitiva, films hollywoodienses de arriba a abajo».
- (6) Quoted by M. Bayles, p. 32.
- (7) Original quote: «El Vietnam es tan sólo el decorado de un gran drama concebido a la manera de un gran misterio medieval».
- (8) A documentary by Peter Davis that interweaves images of the imperialistic propaganda of the fifties, news reports and interviews with American civilians about the Vietnam War. This technique was conceived as a means of demonstrating the culpability of each American in that conflict.
- (9) Willard visits a plantation in which the talk with some French soldiers brings up the following statement: You [Americans] don't even know why you fight» When Willard realizes that these soldiers have been arguing about that question for as many years they have been there, leaves in weariness. Coppola thinks that Americans have been arguing about the same thing for too long. He believes that it is "...a mean attitude... however we lock ourselves in a room to interchange arguments, everything goes on the same»(Hurtado, *Op. cit.*, 69). [Original quote: "una actitud mezquina... por mucho que nos encerremos en una habitación a intercambiar argumentos, todo sigue igual.]. [Last original quote: "América, cierta América, ha muerto... cuando algo muere, se dan las condiciones para un renacimiento»
- (10) Original quote: "una imagen convincente -condensada, deformada y alucinante de lo que tuvo de específico esta guerra:...la falta de objetivos claros, el callejón sin salida en que se metieron los americanos, la hipocresía con que se presentó a la opinión pública...».
- (11) Original quote: "la mala conciencia de América, intentando comprender el por que de la destrucción».
- (12) Original quote: "permite llamar apocalipsis a una derrota política y militar... algo que no puede ser inscrito en la historia porque constituye su fin mismo»
- (13) Original quote: "resume una década, el final de una etapa que se prepara, como Willard, a matar el pasado para asumir el futuro».
- (14) Let's not forget that I am only referring to popular cinema.
- (15) Alan Rosenfeld "translates» the significance of this political act as follows: " We are beginning to forgive the German people for their past sins, in much the same way that America has begun to seek forgiveness for Vietnam»(Quoted by Studlar and Desser, p 11).
- (16) Quoted by S. G. Freedman, p. 56.
- (17) «Gook» is a derogative term for the Vietcong soldiers during the war.
- (18) Original quote «sino una película que con apariencia de aventuras, encubra un desahogo de tipo ideológico».
- (19) Quoted by Hurtado, p 77.
- (20) Original quote «ha sabido reconvertir la vergonzosa derrota militar en una saga heroica»
- (21) «We are just beginning to realize we were led astray when it came to Vietnam», declared President Reagan in an article by Francis Clines in *The New York Times*
- (22) Quoted by Hurtado, p. 48
- (23) Original quote: «es una declaración de principios sobre la guerra y la gente que lucha en ellas».
- (24) Original quote. «la oficialidad, no hace falta aclararlo, nunca es ni podrá ser revolucionaria».
- (25) Original quote. «la versión que el director de *Paths of Glory* [Stanley Kubrick] pueda brindar del tema, mitigar sus posibles repercusiones o, cuando menos, suscitar un agotamiento previo en sus futuros espectadores»
- (26) Original quote. «no es una película sobre la guerra del Vietnam. Vamos, lo es tanto como *Los Pájaros* puede ser considerado un tratado de ornitología».
- (27) Original quote: «Une des raisons pour lesquelles il voulait réaliser un film de guerre était le sentiment que, jusqu' au maintenant, cela n'avait pas été fait correctement»

(28) Original quote. «Je ne pense pas que quiconque sache ce que te publique désire voir. Et i' ne pense pas que le publique le sache davantage».

(29) Original quote. «suggère qu'il y a davantage á dire sur la guerre que de déclarer que c'est un mal. La guerre du Vietnam fut, bien sûr, une erreur tragique dès le départ, mais je crois qu'elle nous a appris quelque chose d'utile. S'il n'y avait pas eu cette guerre, nous serions probablement en train de nous battre au Nicaragua... Les theories de l'époque, comme celles des dominos, ne marcheront pas dan, le futur»

(30) Original quote «que se puede apreciar en el rostro del marine cuando dispara a los que están saliendo de un edificio; no da a ninguno de los cuatro primeros, espera un compás y luego abate a los otros dos».

(31) Original quote. «un des souvenirs que j'ai du Vietnam c'est la presence constante du rock'n'roll»

(32) Original quote «Le livre n'offrait aucune solution morale ou politique facile, il n'était ni pour la guerre ni contre la guerre. Il semblait n'être concerné que par la réalité des choses».

(33) Original quote «1965 fue el año de la escalada de la guerra, el año clave en que lo que se suponía que era un pequeño contingente de hombres que trataban de impedir que el país cayera en manos de los comunistas, pasó -por voluntad del presidente Johnson- a convertirse en un conflicto abierto donde Estados Unidos volvía a asumir su postura de gendarme, y supuesto defensor del mundo libre, y que en realidad encubría la consabida defensa de los intereses de la nación más poderosa del mundo».

(34) This was a fact that provoked an investigation by the U.S. Congress in May, 1967. The result was the promulgation of a new law that Castro resumes as follows: «the U.S. Secretary of State felt in the obligation to publish a regulation which clearly specified that the deliberate concealment of unfavorable news in the radios -about three hundred items at that time, out of which eleven were located at the Asian Southeast- of the Army is strictly forbidden»(p. 60). [Original quote: «el secretario de Estado de los Estados Unidos se viera en la obligación de publicar una normativa que especificaba claramente que el ocultamiento deliberado de noticias desfavorables en las radios -unas trescientas había en aquella época, de las cuales once se encontraban en el Sudeste asiático- de las Fuerzas Armadas esta estrictamente prohibido».]

(35) Original quote: «Curiosamente el film logra su objetivo de poner de relieve la seriedad del tema a partir de su planteamiento humorístico. El telón de fondo dramático de la guerra de Vietnam cobra toda su fuerza por contraposición con el divertido programa que Cronauer debe hacer. El humor de la película nace por tanto... por la falta de adecuación de los personajes con la situación en la que se encuentran».

(36) Original quote: «El cine tiene mucho poder... todo lo que pensamos, nuestra idea del bien y del mal, nuestros gustos, nuestro lenguaje, están conformados por los mass-media».

(37) Quoted by Hurtado, p. 48.

(38) Quoted by Freedman, p. 54.

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