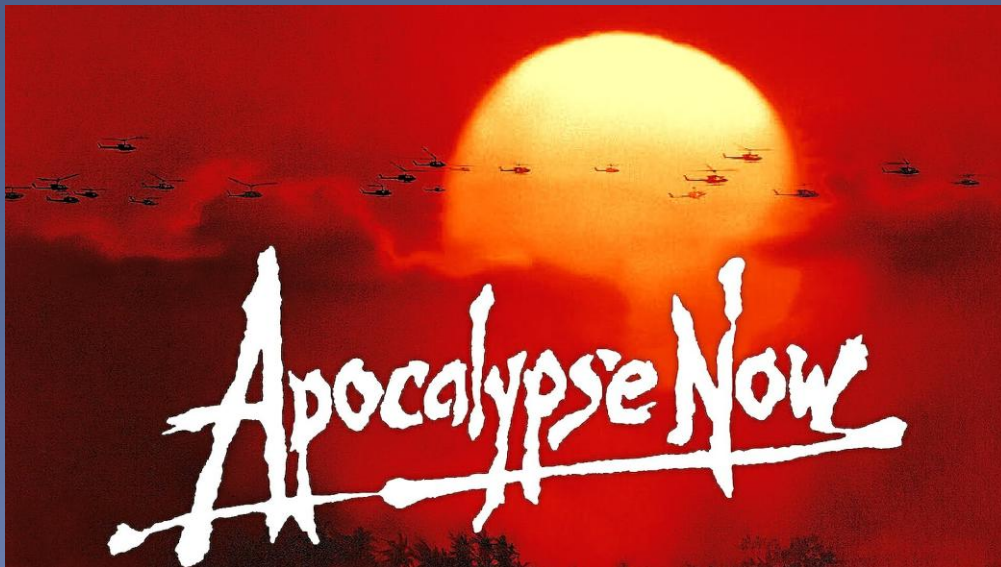


APOCALYPSE NOW FROM LACANIAN POINT OF VIEW



- The Film

- Is about the mental and moral processes which affect people submitted to adverse conditions and how these conditions affect each of the characters in the film in a different way according to their personality, acts and consciousness.
- Francis Ford Coppola said that *Apocalypse Now* was not a film about the Vietnam War but Vietnam itself.
- Two main characters: Captain Willard y Kurtz.

- Willard

"I am still only in Saigon... Every time I think I'm gonna wake up back in the jungle."



- Captain Willard has been asked to eliminate Kurtz, a retired colonel who has become mad .
- Willard starts a parallel journey within the jungle and within his aim. During the trip, he starts to know aspects from the war that will make him understand better the reasons why the man he has to kill left the army and deserted.
- Is a trip to the darkness, an inside trip to his soul.
- A connection between "signified" and "signifier" is highly remarkable in the word "jungle" which is the setting of the whole film.

- The Jungle

- ◉ Is seen as a very profound dark place, it is a savage and impenetrable jungle. The further Willard goes into the jungle the darker it becomes.
- ◉ The jungle can be compared to the Lacanian concept of the Mother figure: *law and desire*
 - > Mother Nature represents the law: The designs of the Mother Nature decide who is going to survive or not.
 - > the jungle represents the mother of desire: Willard is confronted to jungle but he cannot live away from it. He is a survivor in the jungle and he has reached a point where he is unable to live outside the world he has always known.



- Kurtz

"I have seen the horror. Horrors that you've seen. But you have no right to call me a murderer', but you have no right to judge me ."



- From hero to anti hero, from successful officer to deserter.
- he has been aware of the sacrifice and altruism risking his life for the wellbeing of his nation
- He has realized also that the human being can be moral, good-natured but at the same time able to kill without compassion.
- He has known horror and doesn't want to forget it.
- From the Lacanian point of view the existence of 'the horror' is reflected as something which exists over all things.

- The War of Vietnam

"And then I realized they were stronger than we, because they could stand that these were not monsters, these were men... trained cadres. These men who fought with their hearts, who had families, who had children, who were filled with love... but they had the strength... the strength... to do that. If I had ten divisions of those men, our troubles here would be over very quickly. You have to have men who are moral... and at the same time who are able to utilize their primordial instincts to kill without feeling... without passion... without judgment... without judgment! Because it's judgment that defeats us."

”



- ⦿ Difference between the officers and the troop .
 - > Officers decides the strategy according to the policies given by their respective governments .
 - > the soldiers act as machines.
- ⦿ Subliminal critic of the War of Vietnam: ¿Why the Americans are there?
- ⦿ Kurtz said: "it's judgment that defeats us. "
 - > there are men who are moral and basically, that means that there are men who can distinguish if they are behaving in a good-natured way or not.
 - > men are not free spirits according to the last sentence "it is judgment that defeats us". Human nature is determined by judgment.

- Lacanian point of view of Judgment.

- His essay 'The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious' defends the idea that every literary expression is the result of a complex interaction between the author's conscious and unconscious processes.
- if someone tells his son or daughter that he or she is lazy, clumsy or any particular fault, it is expected that the child and future adult will be lazy, clumsy or what that person has been expected to be since he or she was a child. The judgment of one's parents or progenitors determines one's behavior in many ways.
- It is exactly what Kurtz proposes in such a very brief but very condensed sentence, human beings do what they are expected to do.

- Kurtz like the Lacanian “father figure”.



- The father represents the order .
- Lacan distinguishes between the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real father
- Kurtz represents the law, and goes further; besides being respected, he is adored as a god. Is the Symbolic and Imaginary father.
- When Willard kills Kurtz, the tribe see him like he is going to be the substitute of Kurtz.
- The Real father is represented by Kurtz character as the unthinkable father, the primal father.
- Colonel Kurtz is considered to be a brilliant man by his followers but not from the point of view of the spectator. He is the antagonist, a mad men, a monster.

- Willard is the real hero

- ⦿ He survived Vietnam.
- ⦿ He is able to follow the orders but he has his own criteria and his critical point of view of the aforementioned war.
- ⦿ He is a pragmatic hero: Willard follows the instruction given by his superiors because it is the only way left to get out from the aforementioned situation.
- ⦿ After questioning the orders he does what he is expected to do; furthermore, he is able to have a practical mind which enables him not to become mentally ill.



- Bibliography

- Bidwell, Horace, *A Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytical Terms: A Guide to Usage* (New York: Longmans, 1958)
- Eliot, T.S, 'Eyes that I do not dare in my dreams', *Criterion Magazine*, (London: 1925).
- Ferrell, Robin, *Passion in Theory: Conceptions of Freud and Lacan*, Andrew Benjamin, 1st edition (London: Routledge, 1996)
- Freud, Sigmund, *Totem and Tabu: Resemblance between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1938)
- Kaplan, E. Ann, *Psychoanalysis & Cinema* (London: 1990).
- Lacan, Jacques, 'The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious', *Yale French Studies* No. 36/37, 1966, pp.112-147.
- -----, 'Seminar on The Purloined Letter', www.lacan.com/purloined.htm
- Mounier, Emmanuel, *El Personalismo. Antología esencial* (Madrid: Sígueme, 2002).
- Rabaté, Jean-Michel, *Jacques Lacan: psychoanalysis and the subject of literature* (Basingstoke: 2001)
- Žižek, Slavoj, *Looking awry: an introduction to Jacques Lacan through popular culture* (Massachusetts: 1993)
- -----, *Enjoy your symptom: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out* (London: 2001)
- -----, *The pervert's guide to cinema* / directed by Sophie Fiennes. (2006)
- -----
- Coppola, Francis Ford, *Apocalypse Now* (US: Zoetrope Studios, 1979)