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James Gow

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Strategic Pedagogy and Pedagogic Strategy

James Gow, *Kings College London*

Abstract

Despite trends to consider film in the context of international relations, there has been very little real focus on how filmic sources can assist the understanding of war and peace. There is merit in analysing film in its own right; however, beyond this it can be a useful device for teaching and researching particular wars and aspects of them, as well as the relationship of film to war in general. This is demonstrated here by reference to the films about the Yugoslav War of the 1990s. However, exploring the detail of combat or cause or social impact in a particular conflict is not the only role film can play in teaching or research strategies. It is within the power of the moving image medium to explore the very essence and character of both a particular war and the very nature of war itself. This is shown to be the case with Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, where the constant tussle between escalation and ethics, which underpins the conceptual frames of strategy, relating ends and means, is evident. War ceases to be war if the restraints are removed. When they are, the 'river of escalation' leads into the dark-hearted loss of soul, the critical loss of political perspective and purpose and the apocalypse of futility.

Keywords: *Apocalypse Now, conflict in film, escalation, strategy, war films, Yugoslav War*

Introduction

Since the advent of film, an extensive relationship between moving images and war has emerged, irrespective of the precise way in which they are rendered – celluloid, analogue television or some form of digital medium. Despite this relationship, and despite the enormous growth of interest in communications and media studies at school level and above (in the UK, at least), and the commensurate expansion of pro-vision, there has been little serious attempt to bring the two together.[1] Where there has been specific attention to war and film, aside from the occasional coffee-table book, there have been some studies of specific types of film in relation to specific wars, for example, the Second World War,[2] or to a particular war in general: for ex-ample, the Vietnam War.[3] However, even these areas of coverage are limited and often uneven collections, or weak and descriptive studies (though not quite wholly – the studies just referenced on war and society in the Second World War and American combat films are just about the only serious and systematic studies so far). Generally studies pay attention either to the relationship of film with changing social context, or the curiosities of production history. Yet, there is increasing attention to film in most fields, including international relations and the study of war and peace.

The theoretically oriented journal *Millennium* began an interesting film section in 2006, carrying short interpretations of individual films and their relationship to international issues.[4] In 2000, the Department of War Studies at King's College London introduced a revised core course for its MA War Studies programme (the original among a suite of degrees offered), framed around 15 key texts, one of which was consciously selected as fiction feature film text (*Apocalypse Now* examined below), as a way of showing that the investigation of the nature and character of war need not be restricted to written sources, or be purely academic and analytical. However, despite these trends, there has been very little real focus on how filmic sources can assist in the understanding of war and peace (despite the analogous longstanding relevance of literary classics such as Shakespeare's *Henry V* and Tolstoy's *War and Peace*).

Examination of the potential impact of screen narratives of war on the understanding both of war generally and of particular conflicts is important. In carrying out an examination of this kind, it is necessary to investigate the extent to which screen narratives can contribute, through their impact on the legitimacy and understanding of the conflicts themselves, to processes such as peace building and pedagogy, or strategy and research on conflict. To examine the relevance and the role of film in researching and teaching war is, then, to a large extent, to open new avenues of exploration. Even where there has been some kind of treatment, it has largely been produced by authors whose backgrounds lie in cultural studies, or related fields, rather than strategic studies. This statement stands even where there has been considerable public discussion regarding the impact of both television news and current affairs films and documentary series, usually (although not exclusively) shown on television, which are of relevance to this study.[5] The only real focus given to such study is in the domain of propaganda, where the work of Philip Taylor, a communications media scholar, stands out.[6] This field is important, but reflects only a limited part of the prism – even in terms of strategy and operations, in the contemporary era it is of limited relevance.[7] However, aside from this particular focus, and despite the increasing tendency to note and include film within the scope of research and teaching at the margins, there is still scepticism that watching films offers little more than distraction.

Indeed, given the contested nature of war (by definition war is a contest underpinned by violence between politically motivated groups using it as a peculiar decision making tool), there is good reason to wonder why and how film might offer useful routes to analysis and understanding. Of course, in conflicts there are many disputes over who did what to whom, when, for what reason, and with many longstanding grievances to be taken into consideration. In this context, can there be any purpose in seeking to analyse films relating to war? After all, film itself cannot be seen as providing a necessarily reliable version of life. The purpose of this article is to address this issue and to identify the potential use of film beyond the intrinsic confines of studying films in their own right. As has long been recognised, there are important ways in which film can enhance the understanding of their social and historical context – although rich disputes reflect the degree to which there is debate

about what understanding can be gained (see below). The present analysis, therefore, aims to indicate some (by no means all) of the pedagogic and heuristic values of investigating moving images and war. I do so in three stages: first, by an overview of war films, and their relevance and approaches to understanding; second, by examining the way in which a basic variation of adaptation studies in literary-cinematic studies can be used as a cue for investigating either issues of medium, or, more importantly, the events and characteristics of particular conflicts – this is done here with reference to the Yugoslav War of the 1990s; and, finally, by reviewing Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* as a key study of the nature of war – not so much a film about the Vietnam War, as conventionally discussed, but an essay on war itself, and the inherent tensions between escalation and ethics.

Moving images and modern war: interpreting conflict on screen

Moving image media are important in three key ways with reference to the study, or even the conduct, of war. The first of these is legitimacy – the key element defining success in contemporary strategy and war. Legitimacy is a compound of: bases – including legal, political and normative; performance – the level to which a force is effective, irrespective of the bases for action; and support – the degree to which relevant social and community support exists and is maintained, both in terms of bases and performance, but also, where relevant, despite them (although support is always likely to be critically challenged if one or both of the first elements is deficient).[8] Legitimacy is the crucial element, but legitimacy is largely determined by the impact of the key weapon in contemporary warfare: images. While this is more true of news actuality images, it is not exclusively so – and in any case, the image-dominant narrative forms are broadly the same, irrespective of the type of moving image.[9]

To assert the importance of images in relation to legitimacy is to assume an audience – or more pertinently a variety of them. Much analysis has concerned the way in which moving image narratives create the conditions for a conflict, shape understanding of it while war is being fought, or impact upon its character. In particular, there has been emphasis on the way in which simplification and distortion, combined with repetition, create a strong sense of both national and public memory, and of 'the Other'.[10] While national and public memories can usually be regarded as discrete phenomena,[11] in the case of the formerly Yugoslav countries, it has been argued that these have been fused,[12] in large part because of the media processes identified above. However, while these strategies leading to the fusion and consolidation of understanding of the causes and conduct of the conflict can be identified *ex post facto*, it is a major challenge to identify the means by which to address this outcome. In part, this is because no media output, or systematic programme of media representation, can be guaranteed to have a particular desired impact. Many political, educational or marketing media campaigns have been failures,[13] while research on audience

engagement with television news and security indicates a commensurate pattern.[14] The difficulties in guaranteeing that an audience will understand and accept the meaning intended by authors are also linked to findings concerning the impact on contemporary Western societies of representations of violence in various mass media, primarily in screen narratives. While content analysis has demonstrated an increasing incidence of portraying acts of violence in certain areas, such as children's television,[15] it has been more difficult to demonstrate the consequences of this conclusively. On the one hand, research based on the notion that representations of violence in screen narratives provide 'aggressive cues' has shown that violent behaviour observed can also be learned and imitated.[16] On the other hand, studies using notions of reinforcement argue that the portrayal of screen violence reinforces those things to which the receiver is predisposed, meaning that an individual with violent tendencies might be encouraged by viewing violence to act violently, while an individual lacking those tendencies will not be prompted to act in this way.[17]

In addition to the contentions of these different perspectives, there is a long tradition, dating back to Aristotle, which holds that narrative (and symbolic) representation, including acts of violence, can be cathartic and even therapeutic. In this context, difficult emotions find an outlet, cleansing the impulse to be violent as a result of viewing screen narratives.[18] It is on conclusions of this kind that some researchers in media studies, as well as some in peace and security studies, advance the proposition that the media can have positive effects and play a role in the prevention and management of conflict. Their understanding is that film, either in its nature or through its conscious use as a tool of peace building shown to groups as part of the reconciliation process, will be better able to deal with their hostile feelings, dispelling them merely in the process of viewing, or in therapeutic discussion following screening; in either case, catharsis is assumed to be an outcome. The key elements of this have been theorised as providing channels of communication, offering opportunities for education, opening possibilities for confidence-building and mutual understanding, framing and defining the conflict and analysing it, and providing an emotional outlet;[19] that is, catharsis.[20]

The problem is that the most that might be said with confidence is that some individuals might be affected in one way, others in an opposite way and yet others might not be significantly affected at all. However, while a particular interpretation might not be received, one area in which research appears conclusive argues that screen narratives, of whatever type and with whatever intention and interpretation, can set agendas and highlight issues to be considered, even though they cannot necessarily generate any particular interpretation.[21] That is, they play an agenda-setting function. The twin departure points for research that emerge from this are that screen narratives will raise issues for discussion and that they can have some impact regarding interpretation. However, assessing interpretation is made difficult by the complexity of the subject matter, as well as by the potential variety in reactions. Although the twin factors noted above offer reason to investigate the impact of screen narratives on the interpretation of conflict, there is a research problem in gauging the impact of a narrative text, like any other form of communication, on its audience.

The third way in which film can be related to the study of war is its utility as a tool of investigation and interpretation. One of the key issues for many observers of conflicts on screen is whether films constitute a faithful rendition of actual events or a distortion of them. Given the wealth of literature and analysis on problems of interpretation and the nature and conditions of 'reality' (debates rage over whether there is an empirical reality that might be conveyed, whole or only partial realities, or essential realities that depart from the restrictions of the purely empirical and stretch into the realms of figuration and metaphor), this might almost seem to be an issue not worth pursuing in an empirical manner.[22] It might be that the discussion of news and current affairs coverage or war films in terms of their accuracy in representing any war is futile and banal at the same time. In and of itself, analysis of this kind may offer little in terms of salient inference or satisfaction. However, if it is supposed that investigation of the war is valuable on its own merit for academic purposes, or for the broader understanding of the phenomenon, then accuracy of detail is important. Examination of accuracy in detail, as well as in overall interpretation, might be an effective instrument for investigating the character and conduct of war.

Aside from the merit of analysing film in its own right, it is clear that it can be a useful device for teaching and researching particular wars and war in general. While the phenomenon of screened war has limitations, it has a particular role in treating the phenomenon of conflict. It offers possibilities for question and enquiry, as well as for explanation and understanding. That it might also, on occasion, offer the chance of contributing to catharsis and reconciliation only adds to this. Examination of television news and current affairs and fiction feature film enhances the study and understanding of conflict, in terms of the character, conduct and detail of particular conflicts and their political and social contexts. The final sections of this article will consider how film can be used to investigate aspects of one particular conflict and the character of war in general.

The Yugoslav War on screen: faithful rendition, or distortion?

Although the Yugoslav War itself has been the subject of great contention, the essentials of the war may be stated with some authority. The Yugoslav War was a clash of state projects. The core of the war was the Serbian strategy to create a new set of borders, to be inhabited by the Serbs, after the collapse of communist and federal Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s. The counter to this was the aim of other states and territories emerging from the demise of the Yugoslav federation to achieve and maintain statehood within the existing boundaries of the sovereign states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Macedonia and, in the case of Kosovo, an autonomous province (although Croatia adopted a policy of annexation in Bosnia and Hercegovina that echoed the Serbian project).

The conflict was characterised by the practice of 'ethnic cleansing'. This is the strategic use of mass murder, mutilation, torture, rape, removal of identity, deportation and excessive use of force, including siege and bombardment, against civilians in order

to create territories from which whole ethnic communities are removed. The purpose of this action, while complemented by ethno-national animosity, is to ensure the control of territory in which there is no actual, or potential, political, terrorist or guerrilla opposition. In short, its purpose is to defeat the Maoist doctrine of people's warfare: the guerrilla is like a fish in water. The point of ethnic cleansing is to remove the water in which the fish of armed resistance can swim. This practice was employed in the conflict by the Serbian side as the central feature of its strategy. But it was not used by the Serbian side alone: the model was adopted by others, albeit on a lesser scale. It was this deliberate use of extreme violence against civilians for strategic purposes that forced the international community to take action in a Europe not only marked by allegiance to the highest norms of human rights, but also with military and other capabilities to act.

The deliberate targeting of civilians, especially because they formed part of a particular ethnic group, making their physical removal from the territory an object of strategy, went far beyond the bounds of what could be deemed acceptable. The practice breached civilised norms. It also breached the laws of war. It was, further, the feature that drew attention to the conflict, created public interest and generated the controversy surrounding the war. For some, the fact that the use of ethnic cleansing was the result of conscious decision and organisation was obscured by discourse on 'ancient enmities', Balkan culture or historical memory.

The one film accurately to depict the practice of ethnic cleansing is *Perfect Circle* by Ademir Kenovic. At the beginning, a small squad of Serbian soldiers wearing balaclavas is seen attacking a village. This is perhaps as faithful a rendition of the terror induced by such attacks as might be possible. While the violence and murder associated with attacks of this kind is not shown directly, the experience of two small boys who survive the raid and who observe dead adults and animals outside the house in which they hide under a bed, is sufficient to ensure a chilling depiction. In a more philosophical film that contrives to represent the brutal nature of cleansing with sterile, almost abstract distance, *Forever Mozart* by Jean Luc Godard, determined to make a connection with the 1930s and 1940s, shows those about to be shot (not limited to Bosnians) digging their own graves.

While accurate portrayal can be useful for introducing and investigating the war, it is the discrepancies that perhaps offer more interest. For example, does it make a difference that the name of the girl at the heart of Michael Winterbottom's *Welcome to Sarajevo* has been changed from real life and the autobiographical book that is its source? In the film a Muslim girl, Emira, is smuggled out of Sarajevo by a journalist, who is making the transition from the equivalence of professional objectivity to personal commitment. But she is no longer the real Serbian girl who provides the title for the real journalist Michael Nicholson's book, *Natasha's Story*. It is clear that this change reflects the aims of the film makers both to focus on the plight of the Muslims in face of the Serbian campaign in the war, and to make the material accessible to the type of Western audience the film was supposed to mobilise. At the same time, it serves to simplify the reality that there were both Serb and children

of other ethnicities, as well as adults, trapped in the experience of Sarajevo. In this context, the clear use of the film in studies of the Yugoslav War is to identify the potential for simplification and bias, on the one hand, and to highlight the more complex and accurate reality involved, on the other.

It is in the domain of experience, however, that the Yugoslav War, like others, gains most resonance on the screen. *Welcome to Sarajevo* follows the well-established convention of the outsider journalist as a vehicle for approaching the war. For all its sense of commitment and its desire to focus on the people of Sarajevo, the film bears little comparison with contributions to the genre such as Alfred Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent*, Peter Weir's *The Year of Living Dangerously*, or Roland Joffe's *The Killing Fields*. Srdjan Dragojevic, in *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*, on the other hand, has made one of the great war films. Based on a true situation, and taking the stock convention of a platoon under attack (as well as making references to the genre), the film uses the situation and technique to unpack the way in which each member of the Serbian platoon, trapped in a tunnel besieged by their Muslim counterparts, came to be part of the war. It also centrally shows how Milan, the captain of that platoon, and his closest friend Halil, a Muslim, come to be on opposite sides at the tunnel. Implicitly, along the way, some of the threads by which the war was woven are also revealed and, with no more than a nod to the knowing, these are seen to be spun from Belgrade. For example, one of the characters in the platoon, Brzi, is seen to join the army by jumping from a bridge in Belgrade onto the back of one of a long column of vehicles with troops on board, heading off to war. Although nothing is made of the location, it is an important support for the notion that the war in Bosnia was not primarily a local conflict of ethnic hatred, but one stirred from elsewhere. And perhaps the most prominent way in which the film demonstrates the Belgrade link is through the use of the VMA, the Military Medicine Academy, in Belgrade, where Milan finds himself. This role for Belgrade and its military is supplemented by a reference in the credits to the assistance the makers received from parts of the Yugoslav Army. Thus the film takes for granted, in a quiet way, the role of Belgrade. By putting the focus on the Serbian platoon, the makers may not only have facilitated the very making of the film in Belgrade, but also opened the way for a degree of criticism. By putting the focus on the platoon at all, Dragojevic and his team have also made a remarkable contribution to the genre of war films addressing the fate of the 'buddies who fight for each other' in any platoon, in any military around the world.

Perhaps the most controversial film in terms of accuracy is *Underground* by Emir Kusturica, which spans three periods: the Second World War, the Cold War and the Yugoslav War of the 1990s. Early in the film, at the start of the Second World War Belgrade Zoo has been bombed and the town is destroyed and occupied, while the Nazis are seen to be welcomed in Maribor, in Slovenia, and Zagreb, in Croatia on archive film. The deployment of archive footage in this way is at once accurate and disingenuous. It is accurate because the footage is authentic, whereas other pieces of archive footage in *Underground* are faked or computer-enhanced. In terms of detail, however, it does

not allow the audience to know that Maribor was a predominantly ethnic German town in Slovenia, nor that the Slav population elsewhere in Slovenia did not welcome the occupation. Nor does it illuminate the areas of Serbian collaboration with the German powers.

As Dina Iordanova has suggested, in itself this might seem a pedantic and obscure issue for Yugoslav experts, which renders redundant accusations that the film is propaganda, as this may only be discerned by those with relevant knowledge.[23] However, its political significance has three dimensions. First, these issues clearly mark the film as being inherently favourable to Belgrade, irrespective of intention, which, Taylor notes, is required for propaganda.[24] Second, extending beyond the basic character of the film, *Underground* effectively serves the purpose of the Belgrade regime, as propaganda, made with money from Belgrade and the cooperation of the Serbian Security Service, whose chief and some colleagues attended the film's presentation at the Cannes Film Festival, where the film won the 1995 Palme d'Or. Finally, the film works as propaganda which is not immediately apparent because it feeds an interpretation of the conflict as being a backlash of history. Because the film emphasises history, culture and chaotic relations, it helps to reinforce confusion among observers in the outside world. It works as propaganda, as far as this charge is relevant to the film, not because it glorifies the Serbian cause in the war, but because the version offered prevents clear vision of the war's actual causes and conduct. From the perspective of Belgrade, the film works because it will be read in the 'right' way by audiences at home and will prevent clear understanding in the outside world. The usefulness of *Underground* pedagogically, therefore, is as a tool for unpacking these points and the related sets of issues.

Where film can play the strongest role in terms of registering and analysing detail and events lies beyond the sphere of the fiction film, which comprises those examples treated thus far. Documentaries, whether individual films or series, may be important. The key example in this respect is *Death of Yugoslavia* (known as *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* in the United States). This six-part documentary series is a treasure trove. Much of the history of the Yugoslav dissolution and the war that accompanied it is revealed from the proverbial horse's mouth. The method used in research, filming and production, of juxtaposing the version of one protagonist with that of another, creates a narrative flow in which detail appears that would not otherwise be available.

Death of Yugoslavia, unlike the fiction feature films discussed above (*Perfect Circle*, partly excepted), can be used to open discussion on strategy. A key example of this concerns the presentation of the first day of major armed conflict in Slovenia at the beginning of the war. While the film itself does not reveal or depict strategy per se, it can be used to explore the importance of media management as part of Slovenia's integrated strategy. The film makes clear that the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) commanders dealing with Slovenia assumed that there would be no armed conflict. It also describes what appear to have been the opening shots in the war, although this point is not made in the film.[25] That incident concerned the shooting down of a JNA helicopter (carrying bread) over the Slovenian capital, Ljubljana, in the early evening of 27 June 1991. The film then shows the way in which this was presented on news

broadcasts across Europe: the message was that plucky little Slovenia was defending itself against the communist Serbian JNA. The reality was that the downing of the helicopter at a moment when the event would make the headlines on the main evening news broadcasts across Europe was consistent with the Slovenian strategy to provoke armed clashes in favourable situations, then to convey messages of struggle and success through the well-run media-management centre established in the Slovenian equivalent of the Lincoln Center or Carnegie Hall, the Cankarjev Dom. There the Minister for Information, Jelko Kacin, would report part of the truth to his audience of journalists who would then relay the message, often embellishing it, or presuming that Kacin had said things that in fact he had not said. Thus, in this case film does not depict strategy or convey a sense of strategy, but is a vital part of the strategy itself. This enhances its usefulness as an instrument for investigating war.

Apocalypse Now: on escalation and ethics

The Vietnam War generated a striking and salient cultural context, in large part because the conflict had a deeply contested position in the US, which had to come to terms with losing the war despite extensive success militarily and winning just about every battle. The cinematic treatment of Vietnam, generally offering an ambiguous or openly critical interpretation of America's involvement, took time to develop, with little attention in the actual war years (the most prominent fiction feature film account in this phase was *The Green Berets*, a Second World War hero movie transposed inappropriately to the Vietnamese context). Several years after the conflict ended, at the end of the 1970s, a wave of films appeared tackling the home, psychological and broader questions raised by the war (*Coming Home, The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*). Almost a decade later, the next wave of films began to tackle the hard realities of combat experience, linked to interpretations of the overall conflict in most cases; these films were attempts to portray 'Vietnam as it really was' – the epithet attributed to one of those films, Oliver Stone's *Platoon*.[26] The others include *Hamburger Hill* and *Full Metal Jacket*. Stone's film was the first of a trilogy, with the later *Born on the 4th of July* one of a genre of films looking at the fate of the effectively dishonoured veterans, while the final (mostly forgotten) part, *Heaven and Earth*, remains the only American attempt to understand something of the Vietnam War from a Vietnamese perspective. A later film, standing alone for the time being, is *We Were Soldiers*, in which Mel Gibson portrays a real-life officer, Col. Hal Moore, and, based on Moore's account, both offers an attempt to represent the military experience faithfully, and pays close attention to the impact of death on families through its treatment of Moore's wife and the role she takes in delivering the curt telegraphic notices of death to other wives in their shared community. This is a film that restores the honour of the military in Vietnam, in contrast to all the other films. All in their own way stand alongside the famous films of, and about, the Second World War, as well as the great classic about the First World War *All Quiet on the Western Front*. However, while films such as *Hamburger Hill* and *Platoon* might be seen as

'real' in their treatment of a small group experiencing combat, *Apocalypse Now* is the most 'real' in its absurdity. It stands out not as a film on Vietnam but as a filmic-philosophical investigation of the very nature of war – what war is and where its boundaries lie.[27]

Apocalypse Now holds an important place in the canon of the war film, not because it captures the reality, intensity or humanity of general combat, nor because it shows exceptional heroics by individuals or a small band succeeding or surviving in some way on a desperately important or difficult mission. Nor is it because it shows the wider social aspects of war. The claim to be the greatest war film rests on the way it tackles the nature and definition of war itself at the extreme boundaries and beyond. However, somewhat curiously, despite director Francis Ford Coppola's own declared mission to create a film that was both spectacular and a 'philosophic enquiry into the mythology of war',[28] the film has not been treated in this manner.

Coppola's film is loosely structured on Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness*, set in Africa, involving a journey up the River Congo to find the trader, Kurtz, who has become at one with the madness of the jungle, at the heart of darkness. In the film, the journey into the jungle is taken by a special missions US military officer, Captain Willard, who is given an assignment to find Colonel Kurtz, up the river and across the border in Cambodia, who has apparently lost his sanity and is fighting the war by his own rules, and possibly for his own purpose. Willard's mission is to terminate Kurtz's command 'with extreme prejudice'. Kurtz commands a small band of American soldiers loyal to him and indigenous Montagnards, a local tribe he has trained and armed, and who appear to worship him, as he leads them from a Cambodian temple. The film follows Willard's journey upriver, into the heart of this particular darkness, witnessing increasingly insane examples of the US war in Vietnam. As a witness, Willard leads the viewer on this journey, a journey that leads him to question his mission and the degree to which Kurtz's solutions make sense, questioning implicitly those who have given him this mission to re-impose order on war. Willard carries out his mission, but the experience has forced him to question the nature of both it and the war, and has, perhaps, changed him. The references to *Heart of Darkness* and the journey up the river into that heart indicate that one message the film offers is the loss of soul that accompanies colonialist expedition.

The central themes and analogies in the film include colonialism, derived from Conrad's original, and US moral malaise and madness, with the character of Colonel Kurtz losing his mind as an image for the US having lost perspective in the jungle of the world and its attempt to counter communist expansion in Vietnam. Kurtz's madness is a symbol of the country's own state of mind. Other thematic interpretations include masculinity and castration, from a feminist perspective, the Homerian Odyssey, and the links to literature and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which inspired the film.

However, it is the understanding of war as a social phenomenon, involving the management of restrained coercive violence by dedicated social organisations (armed forces) that is at the centre of the film.[29] Restraint, whether ethical or legal, is the key notion: while politics creates a different context, in which the use of lethal and

destructive force is permitted where it would not be normally allowed in society, it is the notion of rules and conventions limiting the scope for the application of violent means that defines war. It is the concept of rules in warfare that generates the notion of war crimes. And it is the boundary that defines war crimes and what is unacceptable in war that *ipso facto* defines war and separates it from random violence, or even the purposive violence of, for example, gangsters. However, as Carl von Clausewitz, historically the most important writer on war, notes, given the political stakes in war, there is a tendency to escalation. It is the battle between escalation and restraint that poses the key questions in war generally, and in *Apocalypse Now* in particular. This is what makes the film more than a mere war film, as it offers a philosophical-visual exploration of the concept, and nature, of war itself.

Coppola investigates, examines and depicts the struggle between escalation and ethics. Willard's officially sanctioned quest to find and terminate Colonel Kurtz is an attempt by those who control the war to maintain and impose the boundaries of what is acceptable: his 'methods' have become 'unsound' and he is giving war a bad name. These are the boundaries that Kurtz has crossed, but only because he has understood the logic of escalation inherent in the search for victory through the decisive use of force. Kurtz understands, following Clausewitz, that war is both a trial of strength and, ultimately, a battle of wills. At the same time, the quest for Kurtz takes us deeper into the jungle and the war, and so further along the path of escalation that Kurtz, with Clausewitzian clarity, has followed, into what some would see as madness, but in many ways is the perfectly rational and logical extension of the decision to apply violent means to political purposes. The logic of violence, once warfare is unleashed, means that both limitation and political purpose will be lost. Kurtz's vision is not pretty: he has seen the pile of little arms severed from the mutilated bodies of children whom US Special Forces had been vaccinating as part of a 'hearts and minds' campaign; those arms were severed by his North Vietnamese opponents as a terror tactic to undermine the US campaign. Kurtz, following the classical tenet of Sun Tzu, came to know his enemy: 'I realised . . . the genius of that. The genius, the will to do that . . . then I realised that they were stronger than me, because they could stand it, these were not monsters, these were men, trained cadres.' But if escalation is followed in this way beyond the limits of political purpose and ethical restraint, then the action ceases to be war. Instead, it becomes the madness and ritual, purposeless, self-justifying perpetual violence that is central to Kurtz's horror.

In the end, while the film is also an analogy for the truth of America's lost war in Vietnam, it is, above all, about the essence of war – the contest between escalation and ethics. In that contest, the restraint of ethics limits escalation, but does so necessarily. For to lose the ethical perspective on the destructive use of force is to escape the boundaries of what is properly understood as war – a social phenomenon involving the use of dedicated social organisations for the management of restrained, coercive violence for political purposes, where it is politics that creates special circumstances for using otherwise unacceptable means, and restraints (ethics and laws) that give definition to the limits applied to this abnormal condition.

Conclusion

There is purpose in studying war films. Aside from the merit of analysing film in its own right, it is clear that they can be a useful device for teaching and researching particular wars and aspects of them, as well as the relationship of film to war in general. While the Yugoslav war film genre suffers from the same strengths and limitations as other war films, it has a particular role in treating the phenomenon of the Yugoslav War itself. It offers possibilities for question and enquiry, as well as for explanation and understanding. That it might also, on occasion, offer the chance of contributing to catharsis and reconciliation only adds to this. However, whether through fiction feature films, or through documentary films, examination in terms of the character, conduct and detail of the war itself and its political and social context enhances study and understanding of the conflict.

However, in moving away from conventional scripted sources, the possibility of exploring more than the detail of combat or cause or social impact concerning a particular conflict should be evident. As the exposition and exploration of *Apocalypse Now* presented above shows, while the trainspotting quest for verisimilitude might have pedagogic and heuristic instrumentality, it is within the power of the moving image medium to explore the very essence and character both of the particular war (the lunacy of US involvement) and the very nature of war itself (the constant tussle between escalation and ethics) that underpins the conceptual frames of strategy, relating ends and means. War ceases to be war if the restraints are removed. When this happens, the 'river of escalation' leads into the dark-hearted loss of soul,[30] the critical loss of political perspective and purpose, and the apocalypse of futility.

Notes

1   The present article draws partly on draft material for one attempt to bring both elements together regarding their peculiar salience for contemporary warfare: Milena Michalski and James Gow, *War, Image, Legitimacy: Viewing Contemporary Conflict* (London: Routledge, forthcoming). That work also relates in part to research under a project for the ESRC's New Security Challenges Programme ESRC Award RES-223-25-0063, 'Shifting Securities: Television News Cultures Before and After Iraq 2003', held jointly by Marie Gillespie, Andrew Hoskins and James Gow. I wish also to acknowledge the value of discussion with various classes I have taught and individual students over the years who have engaged in discussion of moving images and war.

2   Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: The British Cinema in the Second World War*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994); J. Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003).

3   Jack Hunter (ed.), *Search and Destroy: An Illustrated Guide to Vietnam War Movies* (n.p.: Creation Books, 2002).

4   *Millennium,* Issue 34(2), 2006.

5   See James Gow, Richard Paterson and Alison Preston (eds), *Bosnia by Television* (London: British Film Institute, 1997), passim, where Gow was the only person involved with a lasting and embedded background in war studies. Stephen Badsey of the Strategic and Combat Studies Institute at the Sandhurst Military Academy is a notable exception.

6   Philip Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A history of propaganda from the ancient world to the present day* 3rd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). *War and the Media: Propaganda and Persuasion in the Gulf War*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

7   James Gow, 'Hearts, Minds and Retinas: Legitimating Contemporary Warfare', paper presented at the Counter Insurgency Conference, Joint Services Command and Staff College, Watchfield, 1–2 September 2005; Michalski and Gow, *War, Image, Legitimacy*.

8   Michalski and Gow, *War, Image, Legitimacy*.

9   Michalski and Gow, *War, Image, Legitimacy*. Andrew Hoskings, *Televising War From Vietnam to Iraq* (London: Continuum, 2004).

10 Mark Thompson, *Forging War: The Media in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina* (London: Article 19, 1994).

11 'National' memory entails association with events in history, whereas 'public memory' pertains to the political discourse of rulers at a given time. While the former is largely based on symbolic understanding of the past, the latter derives from education in the present. See Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 21–3.

12 Sandra Basic-Hrvatin, 'Television and National/Public Memory', in Gow et al., *Bosnia by Television*, pp. 63–71.

13 Thomas Patterson and Robert D. McClure, *The Unseeing Eye. The Myth of Television Power in National Politics* (New York: Putnam, 1976).

14 *After September 11: TV News and Multicultural Audiences* (London: British Film Institute, 2002).

15 George Grubner et al., 'The Mainstreaming of America: Violence Profile Number 11', *Journal of Communication* 30(3), 1980.

16 Albert Bandura and Richard Walters, *Social Learning and Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963); Leonard Berkowitz, *Aggression: A Social Psychological Analysis Development* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962).

17 Joseph Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (New York: The Free Press, 1960).

18 Aristotle, *De Poetica*, in W. D. Ross, *The Works of Aristotle*, vol. XI (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924); S.W. Jackson, 'Catharsis and Abreaction in the History of Psychological Healing', *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 17(3), 1994; Thomas J. Scheff, *Catharsis in Healing, Ritual and Drama* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979).

19 Robert Karl Manoff, 'Telling the Truth to Peoples at Risk: Some Introductory Thoughts on Media and Conflict', unpublished paper presented at the 'Legitimacy of Intervention for Peace by Foreign Media in a Country in Conflict' Conference, Fondation Hirondelle, Geneva, 3–4 July 1998.

20 Aurelien Colson, 'The Logic of Peace and the Logic of Justice', *International Relations*, 15(1), 2000.

21 Stan Le Roy Wilson, *Mass Media/Mass Culture*, 2nd edn (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992) pp. 16–17.

22 Natalie Zemon Davis, *Slaves on Screen: Film and Historical Vision* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Milton Bates, *The Wars We Took to Vietnam: Cultural Conflict and Storytelling* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1996); M. Blumenson, 'Can Official History be Honest History?', *Military Affairs,* 26, 1962; Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face to Face Killing in 20th Century Warfare* (London: Granta, 1999); Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1977); Robert A. Rosenstone, 'A History in Images/History in Words: Reflections on the Possibility of Really Putting History onto Film', *American Historical Review*, 93(5), 1998, pp. 1173–85; John O'Connor, 'History in Images/Images in History: Reflections on the Importance of Film and Television Study for an Understanding of the Past', *American Historical Review*, 93(5), 1988, pp. 1200–9.

23 Dina Iordanova, 'Kusturica's "Underground" (1995): Historical Allegory, or Propaganda?', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 19(1), 1999, pp. 72–3.

24 Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, p. 6.

25 James Gow and Cathie Carmichael, *Slovenia and the Slovenes: A Small Country in the New Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), ch. 6.

26 *Time*, 26 January 1987.

27 For initial discussion of the film, see Karl French, *Apocalypse Now: The Ultimate A-Z* (also re-published as *Apocalypse Now: Pocket Movie Guide*, both London: Bloomsbury, 1998 and 2000, respectively), an alphabetical collection of snippets and comments relating to the film. A useful resource, it is neither a history of the making of the film nor a critical interpretation. One of the key sources for French's mini-encyclopaedia is Eleanor Coppola, *Notes: On the Making of Apocalypse Now*, 4th edn (New York: Limelight, 1995). This is an important and fascinating source on the making of the film, a diary written by the director's wife while the film was being shot, which has important insights including observations on the creative nature of film making, reflected in her

surprise when the initial, two-thirds-finished assembly of the film is shown and is something 'other' than she could have imagined from the chaos of production and shooting, a 'real step towards film as literature'. But it is neither a history nor an analysis. Nor is the published screenplay, John Milius and Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now Redux* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001), although Coppola's brief foreword does offer information on the genesis of the film and, importantly, on the authorial provenance of different parts of the screenplay, and so the film itself, between Milius and himself (and the unacknowledged improvisational contributions from the cast, for which Coppola takes ultimate credit). The only genuine study is Peter Cowie, *The Apocalypse Now Book* (London: Faber and Faber, 2000). This is essentially a history of the making of the film, providing excellent detail at all stages of the process, which, as reflected in Eleanor Coppola's notes, (on which it inevitably draws strongly) was a major and epic adventure in itself – and gave rise to a documentary using extensive footage shot by Eleanor Coppola while the film was being shot entitled *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*. However, Cowie's study remains embedded in the pre-finished film phase and offers little in the way of critical interpretation.

28 Justin Bower, 'The Horror, the Horror: *Apocalypse Now Redux*', in Jack Hunter (ed.), *Search and Destroy: An Illustrated Guide to Vietnam War Movies* (n.p.: Creation Books, 2002) p. 37.

29 James Gow, *War* (Cambridge: Polity, forthcoming).

30 The 'river of escalation' notion originated with Peter Campbell, a student reading for an MA in War Studies at King's College London, 2005–2006, in response to my provoking a core course class discussing this key text to consider it as a treatise on Just War theory.