

# VIETNAM WAR IN US MEDIA

*This work deals with truth and lies hidden behind the propaganda lead by the media during the war in Vietnam. Beginning from the 1960s and the pro-war propaganda that has its roots in the newspapers, that were writing what leaders wanted to hear, all the way to the big screen and Oscar winning movies. The aim is to show how media manipulated with information to form public opinion into what leaders wanted. This served as a moral boosting method, because the reports about war were mainly about victories and not casualties, which resulted in more and more young people applying to go to war. However, once in Vietnam, many realized that they did not know what exactly they are fighting for. One of the best examples of this, are the movies that are analyzed in this work, such as Full Metal Jacket and Apocalypse Now.*

**Keywords:** war, Vietnam, media, movies, newspapers, manipulation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Only after 1965 Vietnam War hit the headlines in the United States. By the time the war reached its peak in 1968, there were hundreds of journalists reporting from the field. The stories were very often transmitted directly on TV and the Vietnam War soon got the nickname “living room war”. The media played a large role in forming people’s opinion about the America’s interference in Vietnam. When it all started, the media was very optimistic and people supported their troops. However, as the war progressed the reports became more negative and people were having second thoughts about why America got involved in that war in the first place. Furthermore, majority of the people did not know the truth about Vietnam due to the reports that were omitting information which could cut their support. It was not too long before the film industry began with making movies about the war. Unlike the reports, the movies, such as Apocalypse Now or Full Metal Jacket, blurred the line between good and bad which as the result had that the audience did not know who the bad guys were anymore. This topic about the media and the movies and their influence on people’s view of what really happened in Vietnam is something that can be written and talked about over and over without repeating itself. Therefore, in this seminar paper, I will give a brief introduction and description on media’s role in forming people’s opinion, as well as a review of movies that have, in my opinion, fantastically captured the experience of the combat and lives of the troops.

## 1.1. LIVING ROOM WAR

Vietnam War and its consequences have divided the United States and the media played an important role in the process. The media dominated in forming people's opinions and every TV report or newspaper article reported battles but without any deeper context or explanation what was really going on<sup>1</sup>. When we talk about Vietnam War in media, we need to bear in mind that there is a diversity of information and very often contradictory facts due to the large number of reporters who have been there. I will try to analyze the impact the media had on the public and how the media in general presented what was going on to the public. The Vietnam War is often called the "living-room war" because it was the first war where footage of the battles were shown on TV just a couple of hours after they took place<sup>2</sup>. The news reports from Vietnam War are different in comparison to the one from, such as World War II. One of differences is that, most of the time, reporters did not know what they were talking about and what was really going on in front of them. Additionally, this war was treated as a political issue unlike the previous wars. This media close up coverage of the war eventually influenced public opinion turning it against the war. This contradicted to the positive view of the war that the government tried to present to the public<sup>3</sup>. In the media, this war was unlike any other before due to guerilla and psychological warfare and although the War was reported battle by battle, it showed no underlying purpose and was seen as fighting without any important aim. This resulted in lowering people's confidence in government<sup>4</sup>. The people lost faith in government because it was obvious that the stories from soldier's point of view and stories that the media sold did not match<sup>5</sup>. Soon, it became transparent that the government had been lying all along about what was really going on. According to Pew Research Center<sup>6</sup>, the trust in government began to decline in the 1960s and is still falling.

The incident that brought attention to Vietnam War was the Tonkin incident or USS Maddox incident, which was an international confrontation that resulted in more direct involvement of the United States<sup>7</sup>. After this incident had taken place, the conflict escalated and the United States began to send more troops to Vietnam. In fact, this incident was an excuse for America to intervene in Vietnam.

The Tonkin incident is important because it shows how the media, at the beginning, supported the American role in Vietnam. Moreover, it represents how "new management" controlled that everything that appeared in the press was based on official releases. Despite it, no journalist questioned on what basis America has the right to be in Vietnam and no one questioned what the truth was<sup>8</sup>. The journalists were mere messengers whose role was to show to people, via media, things they have never seen. The media's support was based on ideology of freedom where America had to do something about the fact that one of its territories was threatened and

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1 V. SANDERS 2007: 124.

2 M. ANDEREGG 1991: 21.

3 V. SANDERS 2007: 124.

4 M. ANDEREGG 1991: 34.

5 *Vietnam: The War That Killed Trust* – <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/07/opinion/sunday/vietnam-the-war-that-killed-trust.html> (visited: 15 June 2019).

6 *Public Trust in Government: 1958–2019* – <https://www.people-press.org/2019/04/11/public-trust-in-government-1958-2019/> (visited: 29 June 2019).

7 V. SANDERS 2007: 144.

8 V. SANDERS 2007: 154.

attacked by Communist forces. Another reason why the media supported this crisis was so called “objective journalism.” It was the idea that the only goal of the journalist is to present the facts<sup>9</sup>. However, there were no facts, only the official version of the events. On the other side, the media had a freedom it did not have before. Considering that this was the first entirely documented war, its footages were extremely popular on TV. Although there was no censorship on what was filmed, there was a political manipulation. The best example for this is in *Full Metal Jacket* when journalists were told to lie and make it look like Americans are winning<sup>10</sup>. The war did not represent a threat to national security and, officially, America was not directly involved in the war. Because of this, there was no censorship of the media. This public deception regarding American goals and involvement in Vietnam was continued by Kennedy, Johnson, and later, Nixon<sup>11</sup>. It was manipulation of the media by showing an official version of the truth which later led to contradictory facts. When the war was lost, Americans were preoccupied with the question of “why we lost”, but very few bothered to ask “why we went into this war”<sup>12</sup>.

The media was better informed because the journalists that were there in the field have seen the truth about American soldiers dying in the battlefield while the official Military press stated how no American soldier has been injured or killed. However, the differences between what the press reported to the public and the official versions created a gap with the public which turned it against the war. The gap arose due to the fact that the vital information was withheld from the media, and Military lost its credibility because the media did not give any purpose to justify the fighting<sup>13</sup>. Although the war was getting lost at home, majority of Americans were still pro war as the hippie movement grew bigger and bigger. Another thing that added to this was the growing optimism of the officers in Vietnam. Even after the war was lost, there was still the question of the role the media had. Neither the press nor the TV offered an explanation of the purpose of the fighting and sending troops. Nevertheless, majority of the American public relied on the information that they saw on TV rather than what was written in the press<sup>14</sup>. During the mid-1960s television became the most important source of news and had powerful influence on forming public opinion. The reason behind this is, as stated above, this was the first war that whose battles were shown on TV just a few hours after they took place. However, TV reports did not show violence directly only after The Tet offensive TV coverage began to show more violence. Furthermore, television footage put more focus on American troops showing dying American soldiers and all the suffering associated with war creating the image that the war was being waged mostly by US troops<sup>15</sup>. Television failed to put emphasis on the allies and the many more losses of the South Vietnamese soldiers. Furthermore, majority of the photographs that were used in the press were not taken in that time during 1966 when American involvement was the biggest, but was taken earlier at the beginning of the 1960s.

In that earlier time of the war, the journalists mostly relied only on two sources, one being the government and the other soldiers in the field. Throughout the war, the journalists continued to

9 M. ANDEREGG 1991: 31–33.

10 S. Kubrick, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

11 V. SANDERS 2007: 154.

12 D. HALLIN 1986: 3.

13 D. HALLIN 1986: 5.

14 M. ANDEREGG 1991: 28.

15 V. SANDERS 2007: 154.

use these two sources, however, very soon they became divided and critical<sup>16</sup>. This had a major influence on journalism. During the times when there is a political conflict, journalists become detached. However, in this case, it resulted in more negative reporting. This situation continued until the Nixon administration managed to gain influence over the news and the journalists, again, portrayed the troops as “good guys”. Soon, the public began to see the war as a mistake and tragedy<sup>17</sup>. However, the coverage of the war continued to be divided in a sense that on one hand conservative newspapers were publishing stories about American boys in action, while on the other hand mass newspapers were writing guts-and-glory reports. This division was not only present in the journalism, but on the TV and radio as well. Among these media sources, TV was the one with the most influence. In fact, the television made Vietnam politically unique<sup>18</sup>. Unfortunately, since the networks did not preserve tapes of the news, there is very little news material saved. However, later material was saved because, by the end of 1967, 90 percent of the news was about the war. Public opinion depended on television for accurate reports about the Vietnam. Although the war had strong support from the media, most of the footage was edited in order to show to the public what it wanted to see. The same was with the official reports with the numbers of killed Americans. But as the military continued to report about encouraging progress, support for the war began to decrease during the fall of 1967. After the Tet offensive in 1968, the television reports reached the major turning point by portraying the attack as a huge defeat for the US troops<sup>19</sup>. This confirmed that America was not able to win the war. After this offensive, when the prospects for the war became even more negative than before, the majority of public withdrew their support. Due to failures of military strategies, this war resulted into huge casualties and because of this is considered to be one of the darkest parts of American history.

It is often said that the war „ was lost in the living rooms of America, not on the battlefields of Vietnam “<sup>20</sup>. As stated above, this was the first televised war that was almost instantly transmitted in the living rooms. The footage of the conflict showed the brutality of war and violence, which eventually turned the people against it. Therefore, there are many that see the media as the reason, or one of the reasons, why America lost the war.

## 2. VIETNAM ON THE BIG SCREEN

The Vietnam War drastically changed the way combat was shown on the big screen. New techniques in dialogues, sound effects, and music were used to portray American troops fighting. Sound effects in dialogues were used to show leadership; new and young soldiers were usually shouting and being loud in general while experienced soldiers were talking calmly. The most prestige combat films tell the story from the point of view of the low-rank soldier showing the very personal war<sup>21</sup>. These movies tell the story of terror told through the heroic narratives that lead us into the story of a war that ends in defeat and failure. When one watches these movies,

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16 V. SANDERS 2007: 154.

17 D. HALLIN 1986: 5.

18 M. ANDEREGG 1991: 43.

19 V. SANDERS 2007: 136.

20 D. HALLIN 1986: 103.

21 *The Vietnam War Dramatically Changed On-Film Combat* - <https://www.historynet.com/the-vietnam-war-dramatically-changed-on-film-combat.htm> (15 June 2019).

one is watching the sacrifices those soldiers made for the American nation, seeing these movies became part of American identity<sup>22</sup>. Furthermore, it became common to end these movies with a scene in which we see close-ups of each of the characters as a way to make a visual roll call and imprint an image in our heads with a single thought – this is a real story, this happened. Moreover, movies that are made in documentary-style show real interviews with the veterans, or include pictures of real footage<sup>23</sup>. This makes the movie even more intimate. Unlike other Hollywood war movies, the movies about Vietnam are not made for the global audience, their target is the American audience.

## 2.1. APOCALYPSE NOW

Before I discuss the movie of my choosing, I think that it is important to say something about its historical background. The press conference by Dwight Eisenhower held on 7 April 1954 is considered as one of the key moments that influenced how the public saw the situation in Vietnam. During his speech he presented a theory called “domino theory” that is based on the assumption that if one country in a region falls under the communist regime, then the surrounding countries will fall as well. This was used to justify American intervention and the potential loss of troops. However, when the question of the psychological aspect that the war had on those troops was raised, everyone turned a blind eye and Hollywood sold lies. Very few directors tried their best to show the real Vietnam so that people could understand what happened and to heal the trauma left after the war. One of those directors is Francis F. Coppola<sup>24</sup>.

Movies about Vietnam War deal with themes which are typical for any movie about war; evil and power, suffering, good vs. bad, redemption. One of the movies, which I will analyze in this seminar paper, is *Apocalypse Now*. The reason I choose this movie is that, in my opinion, viewing this movie as a meditation on the nature of the war and its influence allows us to bridge that gap with incredible insights in the movie’s overall aesthetic as well as the historical setting. Although this movie is based on the book *Heart of Darkness*, it was not made as a movie adaptation of that book<sup>25</sup>. The main storyline, however, remains the same; a journey on a river in search of Colonel Kurtz who represents the biggest evil and has the darkest heart. He represents a man who broke down after going through the horrors of war for too long and lost his humanity and moral code<sup>26</sup>. He is a great example of the consequences that many men suffered due to the brutality of Vietnam War. Furthermore, the Colonel is an example of how, given the right circumstances, any man is capable of losing his moral code and fall into brutality<sup>27</sup>. Through the character of Colonel, we see brutal violence and killing without justification. The movie shows us the war at the point where it was no longer about defeating communism but rather a pointless slaughter<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, it can be seen as an example of what happens when someone is forced into a situation where death and terror are everyday life. War has

22 D. HALLIN 1986: 8.

23 *The Vietnam War Dramatically Changed On-Film Combat* - <https://www.historynet.com/the-vietnam-war-dramatically-changed-on-film-combat.htm> (15 June 2019).

24 G. ADAIR 1981: 10.

25 P. COWIE 2001: 11.

26 G. ADAIR 1981: 25.

27 F. F. COPPOLA, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, 2001.

28 P. COWIE 2001: 21.

its moral code; therefore, many veterans are haunted by the sense of guilt because they have violated their personal moral codes<sup>29</sup>.

One of the scenes that truly shows how pointless the war has become, and how it influenced people who were in Vietnam for a long time, is the scene where helicopters attack Vietnamese outpost so that they can surf on the beach<sup>30</sup>. Firstly, that point down the coast was being avoided because there were too many Vietnamese soldiers located at one place. However, when they found out that that place has perfect the beach for surfing, they changed their minds. They have put themselves in danger just because the leader of their group could have a chance to surf on the beach while they are killing the enemies. After they land, the Colonel in charge calls planes to drop napalm while saying: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning... It smelled like victory."<sup>31</sup>This quote became one of the most recognizable quotes in the genre that usually does not use one-liners. The highlight of the entire scene is the part where they are blasting Richard Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" from the helicopters as they are approaching the enemy and getting ready to shoot. This scene shows not only the pointless killing but it mocks the American army as well<sup>32</sup>. They are represented as killers that will kill anyone just for fun, without any justified reason. Here, their main goal was not to defeat the enemy, because they were outnumbered by them, but rather to distract them with the attack so that the rest of the soldiers can surf<sup>33</sup>. They forgot the main reason why they were there at the first place. They did not have the main goal that needed to be met with fighting<sup>34</sup>. With no justified reason or goal to achieve, they were killing just for the sake of it. This is what turned Vietnam War into pointless fighting without higher cause. In my opinion this one of the scenes that truly shows the absurdity of the war. In this version of the war, high ideals and patriotism are no longer important<sup>35</sup>. The war was fought for the sake of war. Therefore, the main idea of this movie is that war like this can destroy a person with high ideals.

Another motif that can be seen throughout the movie is madness. This motif is presented at the beginning of the movie through the juxtaposition of three things: disorientation, the violence of the war, and the usage of opiates<sup>36</sup>. The main character was sent to kill Colonel, who, as we are told, possesses clarity although he went mad and uses tyrannical brutality as a war strategy. However, his brutality is just expansion of the war brutality. Every character bears a dose of madness within him, because madness comes from within. War does not create it, but rather it creates the war. In the Colonel's case, his madness gave him power over the native population. This is a symbol that represents what happened to the rest of the native civilians during the war<sup>37</sup>. However, no other character is shown as being powerful. They all act like their fates are not in their control, but rather being controlled by greater forces. Colonel is the only one to use his power and force it upon natives because his power is greater, more "civilized"<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, the generals that have sent the assassin to kill him are more afraid of their stolen control rather than his violent nature.

29 G. ADAIR 1981: 38.

30 P. COWIE 2001: 58.

31 F. F. COPPOLA, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, 2001.

32 G. ADAIR 1981: 52.

33 P. COWIE 2001: 58.

34 E. COPPOLA 1991: 32.

35 G. ADAIR 1981: 61.

36 G. ADAIR 1981: 63.

37 E. COPPOLA 1991: 36.

38 F. F. COPPOLA, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, 2001.

Although, they say that they want him eliminated because of his brutality, he was just doing what they sent him to do at the first place, win the war<sup>39</sup>. His violent ways are not any different from acts of superior officers who throw napalm over villages. In my opinion, the real reason they have sent an assassin to kill him was because they needed someone to put the blame on.

As every other war, the Vietnam War is presented as the battle between good and bad. However, most of the time it is not easy to distinguish who is supposed to be “good” and who “bad”. As mentioned before, it was very easy for someone to lose their moral code once they were in the battlefield. The question of morality is one of the biggest issues that we are faced with when we talk about the Vietnam War<sup>40</sup>. From my point of view, the movie “Apocalypse Now” gives a great presentation of morality, especially when talking about who are the “bad guys” and who are the “good guys”. For instance, there are scenes that show American soldiers killing civilians in the village as well as scenes where Americans are being brutally killed<sup>41</sup>. This proves that there is no clear difference between what is black and what is white. Furthermore, it shows that, de facto, there is no good side as such. If anything, this movie makes us reconsider whether evil is already inside us or is it created by circumstances. The question of morality remains a grey area. The dark and light contrast, with things hidden in shadow, is one of the reoccurring motifs within the movie. The presence of the darkness marks the absence of civilization<sup>42</sup>. As the movie progresses it begins to be darker and darker. At the end of the movie, the killing of Colonel is shown with shadows. The characters are searching for an escape from this darkness by using alcohol and various drugs<sup>43</sup>. Under the influence of various opium’s, they long for home. The more things they do or have that remind them of home the more they miss it and become frustrated that they are not there. As a result, their anger turns into blind killing.

Considering that that the interpretation of this kind of movie can be very subjective, one must ask a general question on whether this movie is anti-war or pro-war movie. Of course, any movie if cut the right way can serve as a pro-war propaganda, however, the director Francis Coppola claimed that he made a politically neutral movie. He stated that his movie is, foremost, an anti-lie movie<sup>44</sup>. His original aim was to show how torturing and killing is presented as moral to an entire nation<sup>45</sup>.

## 2.2. FULL METAL JACKET

While there are 28 categories of war movies<sup>46</sup>, Hollywood war movies can be sorted in three categories: the anti-war movies, the movies that tell us that war is necessary and the propaganda movies<sup>47</sup>. However, “Full Metal Jacket” is a movie that embraces contradictions of the Vietnam

39 G. ADAIR 1981: 63.

40 E. COPPOLA 1991: 13.

41 F. F. COPPOLA, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, 2001.

42 E. COPPOLA 1991: 26.

43 F. F. COPPOLA, *Apocalypse Now Redux*, 2001.

44 G. ADAIR 1981: 74.

45 E. COPPOLA 1991: 15.

46 *War Films by Genre* – [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:War\\_films\\_by\\_genre](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:War_films_by_genre) (15 June 2019).

47 *Characteristics of War Movies* – <https://ourpastimes.com/characteristics-of-war-movies-12466245.html> (visited 15 June 2019).



War and is often considered to be one of the best war movies ever made<sup>48</sup>. “Full Metal Jacket” is a movie consisting of two parts. At the beginning we see cross cutting shots of different men getting ready for military while “Hello Vietnam” can be heard in the background. Without knowing anything about the characters, we are introduced into the movie where the loss of individuality is one of the reoccurring motifs<sup>49</sup>. Throughout the movie it can be visible that the individual is dead<sup>50</sup>. Using the US Marine Corps, this movie shows that under an institutionalized system the only thing that matters is only the function of the said system. The movie Full Metal Jacket can be divided into two parts. The first part is the beginning of the movie where we can see dehumanization and the loss of individuality during the training of the soldiers, while the second part is their combat in the Vietnam<sup>51</sup>. During the first part of the movie we can see how boys that came to Marine Corps are being overworked and humiliated by the mechanism. Furthermore, there is also the theme of their relations inside the platoon<sup>52</sup>. They need to have each other’s back in every situation, including when all of them were punished because of the mistakes of one. The most important character during this first part is Pyle. Due to the mistakes he made and punishments he had to endure, pushed to his limits he had a mental breakdown which resulted in killing the sergeant and committing suicide<sup>53</sup>. This scene shows what is done to boys to turn them into soldiers. The scene where others abuse him during the night causes him to become excellent marine but at the same time marks the beginning of his mental breakdown which ends in murder-suicide scene<sup>54</sup>. Furthermore, it shows what can happen if the system backfires. Their basic training was so dehumanizing and can have such an impact that it is questionable whether it is ethical.

When speaking of ethical and moral matters, we can see how one of the characters becomes a reporter whose job is to write articles that suggest America is winning even if it’s not<sup>55</sup>. This raises the question whether war can be faithfully captured. The focus is not put on the war itself, but rather on the loss of individuality where the individual does not matter under the institutionalized system as well as the transformation of men into killers<sup>56</sup>. The movie portrays the psychological impact of military training, while, at the same time, remains darkly humorous movie. Using the element of humor, the movie deals with themes such as trauma, fear, or anger. In addition, we can see the John Wayne effect where they went to war expecting to be heroes but instead got traumatized. One of the questions that this movie raises is the question of free will and whether the soldiers have it. Many praise this move as one of the Kubrick’s best work, mostly due to the first part of the movie<sup>57</sup>. The sequence with the camp and platoon shows the impact of the brutal training as well as the mental breakdown of the one of the characters<sup>58</sup>.

48 *Full Metal Jacket* – <http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/1/fullmetal.htm> (visited: 15 June 2019).

49 S. KUBRICK, M. HERR, G. HASFORD 1987.

50 *Full Metal Jacket: The Individual Is Dead* – <https://deepfilmanalysis.wordpress.com/2016/02/24/full-metal-jacket-the-individual-is-dead/#more-250> (visited: 20 July 2019).

51 *Full Metal Jacket* – <http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/1/fullmetal.htm> (visited: 15 July 2019).

52 G. HASFORD 1979: epub.

53 *Full Metal Jacket: The Individual Is Dead* – <https://deepfilmanalysis.wordpress.com/2016/02/24/full-metal-jacket-the-individual-is-dead/#more-250> (visited: 20 July 2019).

54 S. KUBRICK, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

55 G. HASFORD 1979: epub.

56 *Full Metal Jacket* – <http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/1/fullmetal.htm> (visited: 15 July 2019).

57 *Full Metal Jacket: The Jungian Thing* – <https://www.davidlouisedelman.com/2007/10/29/full-metal-jacket/> (visited: 20 July 2019).

58 *Full Metal Jacket: The Individual Is Dead* – <https://deepfilmanalysis.wordpress.com/2016/02/24/full-metal-jacket-the-individual-is-dead/#more-250> (visited: 20 July 2019).



Additionally, the first part of the movie can be seen as a parallel to the war in Vietnam. At the beginning, the soldiers believed that they are fighting for freedom and justice, when the initial aim was to stop communism<sup>59</sup>. The movie is set around The Tet Offensive, when North Vietnam began to better prepared than US soldiers and started winning. Soon, US withdraw its troops and left Vietnam in a worse state than before. This parallel can be seen on the example of how others treated Pyle and how his character has developed to, seemingly, better and into a much worse state than it was in the beginning. The Pyle character can be viewed as a metaphor for Vietnam. The movie is set around duality and it is best represented through Joker<sup>60</sup>. The scene that stands out the most is the scene where Joker has a mallet with the “born to kill” writing while he wears a peace sign on his jacket at the same time<sup>61</sup>. His character is based on the duality of man. On one hand, he represents the ideals of US and is a good soldier, while on the other hand we can see that he is against the war. In most scenes we can see how he is thorn between this duality<sup>62</sup>. He is a trained killer who got a job in newspapers in the Marines where he is just an observer of the chaos revolving around him. Throughout the movie, he hides behind his killer persona until at the end of the movie when he is finally transformed into a killer<sup>63</sup>. The entire movie Joker has been afraid of killing, and now he has finally faced his fear and conquered it. Another interesting character is Sergeant Hartman. When he introduced in the movie, he came off like a villain character. However, as the plot developed it became clear that he is not the villain but rather something like a father figure who is trying to prepare the boys to survive once in the field<sup>64</sup>.

Besides the duality theme, there are also a few other themes that can be seen throughout the movie<sup>65</sup>. During the first part, we can see the theme of transformation. All of the men that are in the camp are there to be transformed into killers. The main goal of their training is to leave their humanity and to kill without thinking<sup>66</sup>. Additionally, as mentioned before, their individuality is erased to the point where they all get new nicknames as a way of indicating their new identities. Besides forming them into killers, another process through which they go is forming their masculinity. They have to endure humiliations in order to form their characters and to fit into “John Wayne persona” which defines their manhood and masculinity. However, the thing that stands out the most about this movie is that it does not take anybody’s side. There are not “good guys” and “bad guys”, the moral labels are blurred and intertwined. The audience’s task is just to observe<sup>67</sup>.

59 G. HASFORD 1979: epub.

60 *Full Metal Jacket: The Jungian Thing* – <https://www.davidlouisedelman.com/2007/10/29/full-metal-jacket/> (visited: 20 July 2019).

61 S. KUBRICK, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

62 *Full Metal Jacket* – <http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/1/fullmetal.htm> (visited: 15 July 2019), *Full Metal Jacket* – <http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/1/fullmetal.htm> (visited: 15 July 2019).

63 S. KUBRICK, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

64 *Full Metal Jacket: The Individual Is Dead* – <https://deepfilmanalysis.wordpress.com/2016/02/24/full-metal-jacket-the-individual-is-dead/#more-250> (visited: 20 July 2019).

65 *Full Metal Jacket* – <http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/1/fullmetal.htm> (visited: 15 July 2019).

66 S. KUBRICK, *Full Metal Jacket*, 1987.

67 *Full Metal Jacket* – <http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/1/fullmetal.htm> (visited: 15 July 2019).

### 2.3. GOOD MORNING, VIETNAM!

All of the movies about the Vietnam War have a serious approach to the theme no matter whether the movie is anti-war or pro-war. However, there is one movie that took a different approach to the subject<sup>68</sup>. That movie is "Good Morning, Vietnam!" made in 1987. It tells a story about a sergeant and a disc jockey Adrian Cronauer during his time as a broadcaster for Armed Forces Radio Service. The title of the movie was his catch phrase and a way to approach a very serious theme in a comedic way. Making of this movie was a huge risk because the idea of laughing at the Vietnam War could be an audience turnoff if not enough years have passed since then, and this movie was released only twelve years after the War<sup>69</sup>. In the same manner in which other war movie use violence in order to show the brutality of war, this movie does the same but with using humor.

When Cronauer comes to the base, he changes the format of the radio show going against the authorities. After all the movies with generals and soldiers in the main role, here we have a radio broadcaster who makes political jokes and reads uncensored news<sup>70</sup>. Among many great scenes within the movie, there is a one scene that, in my opinion, stands out. The scene begins with the traditional "Gooooood Morning Vietnaaaaaaam!" yell from Cronauer. After that, he calls out to the two soldiers he met the day before called O'Maley twins and plays them a song called „What a Wonderful World“<sup>71</sup>. While the song is being played, various scenes show up. The first shots show troop boarding planes and riding in the jeeps, then it shifts to the Vietnamese living their daily lives. We can see them in polluted water, living on the streets and farming land. Suddenly, the scene changes into explosions, screaming children, people being executed by the Viet-Cong soldiers. The final shot shows Vietnamese protesting against something and the Americans filming what is happening around them until they are attacked by a Vietnamese. As the song ends, we can see an American base<sup>72</sup>. Moreover, the connection that is established between the imagery and the music defines this move<sup>73</sup>. I think that this scene stands out because it can be compared to the helicopter scene with Wagner's music in /Apocalypse Now/.

One must give credit to this movie for recognizing the Vietnamese. It portrays the people, their costumes, daily life and generally portrays the character better than other movies do<sup>74</sup>. Moreover, the movie's focus is on the whole story about the Vietnam War, not just on the individual events. It's focus is not on the military but rather on the common people in the war affected zones showing the audience the other side of the story. As mentioned before, in the movies about the Vietnam War it is difficult to say who are good and who bad guys are. Usually, in war movies there were always heroes and the story was concentrated on good versus bad. However, Vietnam influenced the war movies because Americans began to doubt their initial motivation and whether it was the right thing to do. The movie "Good Morning, Vietnam!" does the same thing as other Vietnam

68 C. FELLERS 2005: 232–241.

69 *Good Morning Vietnam: An "Un-War" War Movie* – <https://headtale.com/2014/08/12/good-morning-vietnam-an-un-war-war-movie/> (visited: 20 July 2019).

70 B. LEVINSON, *Good Morning Vietnam*, 1987.

71 C. FELLERS 2005: 232–241.

72 B. LEVINSON, *Good Morning Vietnam*, 1987.

73 *"Good Morning, Vietnam" (1987) – Using Music to Tell A Story* – <https://monkeysfightingrobots.co/good-morning-vietnam-1987-using-music-to-tell-a-story/> (visited: 10 August 2019).

74 C. FELLERS 2005: 232–241.

War movies but it takes a new approach to the matter. However, the one thing that is the same in Vietnam movies genre is the fact that the experience of the war always changes the main character. When Cronauer is first introduced in the movie, he is shown as a man who enjoys life and does not take anything seriously. As the story progresses, he begins to realize that there is a war around him and that people are dying<sup>75</sup>. He becomes aware of how serious the situation really is<sup>76</sup>. By the end of the movie he realizes how much he owes to his countrymen.

Furthermore, another theme that this movie deals with is how officials were misleading the masses through the media to keep them ill-informed and ignorant of what was really going on<sup>77</sup>. Civilians were not the only target of this misleading censorship, but the soldiers as well. They lied about war to the same soldiers that fought it. Even the main character is ignorant at first, until he survives an attack. As the storyline develops, he becomes more and more educated about the matter and wants to share this truth with his listeners. However, he continues to use humor as to prove that sometimes all you can do is laugh to keep yourself sane. That is exactly what the real, actual, Adrian Cronauer did. His real-life experience in Vietnam served as a basis while making this movie<sup>78</sup>. His radio show was one of the few forms of relaxation and comfort to the soldiers. His disobedience was in direct contradictory with the official viewpoint<sup>79</sup>. The ideal music from the 1950s adds to the image of total control over the war and hints the optimistic feeling that the authorities were trying to preserve. And on the other side there is Adrian, who was first introduced to us dressed unofficially and playing rock and roll<sup>80</sup>. Throughout the movie he was a combination of both military and civilian, as well as symbol of official and unofficial conflict. By putting the focus on just one main character, this movie succeeds to capture the change in one's viewpoint before and after the Vietnam war.

### 3. CONCLUSION

To sum up, I would like to say how these selected movies, as well as many others, are not just records of the past but rather a story about humanity, culture and political choices. As it can be seen from these movies, American soldiers are the central characters while the Vietnamese are always represented as background peasants, prostitutes or merciless enemy.

In most Hollywood movies, America is represented as the world's police that brings justice. These movies present it for what it really is – a force that entwines where it should not. There is nothing "Hollywood" about these movies, but rather a brute reality.

War movies like "Full Metal Jacket", "Apocalypse now" and "Good Morning, Vietnam!" show that there was nothing glorious in this war. Movies like this carry the trend of analyzing what went on in the Vietnam and questioning the ethics of war. The question of good and bad became the question of right and wrong. This is the first war where parents could see their sons being killed

75 *Good Morning Vietnam* – <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/good-morning-vietnam-1988> (visited: 20 July 2019).

76 *Good Morning Vietnam: An "Un-War" War Movie* – <https://headtale.com/2014/08/12/good-morning-vietnam-an-un-war-war-movie/> (visited: 20 July 2019).

77 C. FELLERS 2005: 232–241.

78 *Good Morning Vietnam* – <https://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/good-morning-vietnam-1988> (visited: 20 July 2019).

79 C. FELLERS 2005: 232–241.

80 *Good Morning Vietnam: An "Un-War" War Movie* – <https://headtale.com/2014/08/12/good-morning-vietnam-an-un-war-war-movie/> (visited: 20 July 2019).

from safety of their homes, watching the media. The one question that still remains is: was it really justified to send so many troops in Vietnam.

Although, many decades have passed, this war or any other should not be forgotten. No matter the reason, no war and no death it caused can not be justified. Was this another war that begun for political reasons but was presented to the people as something for their own good or was it really to help Vietnam people, is not on me to judge. However, after all this literature and movies, one thing is certain: the more we research it, more and more opposite views emerge. As the time passes, it will be even more difficult to discover the truth.

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