



Laboratoire de Recherche en Art et Culture



*Revue internationale de langues,
littératures et cultures*

Numéro 23
Janvier 2025

ISSN
0851-4119

Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis
B.P. 234, Saint-Louis, Sénégal

Safara N° 23, janvier 2025 – ISSN 0851-4119

**Revue internationale de langues, littératures et cultures
Laboratoire de Recherche en Art et Culture**

UFR Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université Gaston Berger
BP 234 Saint Louis, Sénégal

Tel +221 77 718 51 35 / +221 77 408 87 82

E-mail : babacar.dieng@ugb.edu.sn / khadidiatou.diallo@ugb.edu.sn

Directeur de Publication

Babacar DIENG, Université Gaston Berger (UGB)

COMITE SCIENTIFIQUE

Augustin	AINAMON (Bénin)	Babacar	MBAYE (USA)
Abdoulaye	BARRY (Sénégal)	Magatte	NDIAYE (Sénégal)
Babou	DIENE (Sénégal)	Fallou	NGOM (USA)
Simon	GIKANDI (USA)	Ousmane	NOM (Sénégal)
Pierre	GOMEZ (Gambie)	Maki	SAMAKE (Mali)
Mamadou	KANDJI (Sénégal)	Ibrahima	SARR (Sénégal)
Baydallaye	KANE (Sénégal)	Ndiawar	SARR (Sénégal)
Fatoumata	KEITA (Mali)	Alexiskhergie	SEGUEDEME (Bénin)
Vamara	KONE (Côte d'Ivoire)	Aliko	SONGOLO (USA)
Edris	MAKWARD (USA)	Marième	SY (Sénégal)

COMITE DE RÉDACTION

Rédacteur en Chef : Mamadou BA (UGB)

Corédacteur en Chef : Ousmane NGOM (UGB)

Administrateur : Khadidiatou DIALLO (UGB)

Relations extérieures : Maurice GNING (UGB)

Secrétaire de rédaction : Mame Mbayang TOURE (UGB)

MEMBRES

Ibrahima DIEME (UGB)

Cheikh Tidiane LO (UGB)

Mohamadou Hamine WANE (UGB)

© *Safara*, Université Gaston Berger de Saint Louis, 2025

Couverture et mise en page: Dr. Mamadou BA, UGB Saint-Louis

Sommaire

1. Devotional Soninke Poetry: Mama Jagana's Songs in Praise of Shaykh Hamallah and Yacouba Sylla
Cheikh Tidiane LO 1
2. The Processes of Religious Values Reform and Building of New Ethics in Victorian literature: Illustrations in *Silas* by George Eliot
Ibrahima DIÉMÉ 23
3. Dehumanization and Purgation of American Loss in Vietnam in Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978)
Louis Mathias FAYE 43
4. Sustaining the Empire's Legacies: Schooling and The Perpetuation of Colonial Subjectivity in Post-colonial Senegal
Mamadou Moustapha SANGHARE 107
5. War Trauma on Soldiers in *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane, *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque and *A Rumor of War* by Philip Caputo
Papa Ibrahima MBODJI 131
6. L'éthique de l'humanisme moderne occidental : le « deuxième péché originel »
Maurice GNING 149
7. Colonialismo y búsqueda de identidad: Estudio comparativo entre *Amkoullel, l'enfant peul* de Amadou Hampâté Bâ y *Las tinieblas de tu memoria negra* de Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo
Abdoulaye GUEYE 173
8. Art des intraduisibles dans « L'ingénieur hidalgo Don Quichotte de la Manche » de Louis Viardot
Rodrigue BIGOUNDOU 191
9. Interview with Professor Omar Sougou on Oral Literature, Teaching Philosophy, and the Future of African Scholarship in a Rapidly Changing World
Cheikh Tidiane LO 209

Dehumanization and Purgation of American Loss in Vietnam in
Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* (1978)

Louis Mathias FAYE

Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (Sénégal)

Abstract

This article examines the absurdities of war and its effects on human mind, particularly on Vietnamese civilians and American soldiers in Vietnam. In *The Deer Hunter*, Michael Cimino explores the atrocities of warfare, which have a sense of dehumanization towards Vietnamese people because they are subject to all kind of sufferings and devoid of human dignity added to their killing and destruction of properties and land. The study lays emphasis on American soldiers who act violently against civilians. The hunters are held captive in a camp and forced to play a deadly game called the Russian roulette by the Vietcong. It consists in killing oneself with one shot on the head using a gun. This destructive force used in Vietnam has lingering impacts on characters like Mike, Nick and Steven. These prisoners of war are dehumanized owing to the introjecting violence of the Vietcong. Nick cannot cope with this traumatic event he witnesses and suffers during the captivity. He ends up killing himself by attempting to play again the Russian roulette. Nick's death is a way to purge the loss and humiliation of America in Vietnam. The purgation frees America from the unforgotten syndrome of Vietnam. This paper explores the physical trauma and the immorality of war on Vietnamese civilians and vets. It discloses the aftermath and the dramatic consequences of warfare on human nature. The war releases through Nick a plethora of complex emotions to achieve some sort of catharsis.

Key words: Vietnamese, dehumanization, veterans, trauma, Vietnam

Résumé

Cet article examine les absurdités de la guerre et ses impacts sur l'esprit humain, en particulier les civils vietnamiens et les soldats Américains au Vietnam. Dans le film, *The Deer Hunter*, Michael Cimino explore les atrocités de celle-ci qui déshumanisent les Vietnamiens parce qu'ils sont exposés à toute forme de souffrances et dépourvus d'une dignité humaine

s'ajoutant au massacre et à la destruction de leurs biens et terres. Cette étude porte sur les soldats américains qui posent des actes violents contre les civils. Les chasseurs sont emprisonnés dans un camp et contraints à un jeu mortel appelé Russian roulette par les Viêt-Cong. Cela consiste à se donner la mort d'un seul tir de balle. Cette force destructive a des effets persistants sur les personnages comme Mike, Nick et Steven. Ces prisonniers de guerre sont déshumanisés en raison de la violence qu'infligent les Viêt-Cong. Nick ne peut pas faire face à l'évènement traumatique qu'il assiste et souffre pendant la captivité. Sa mort est un moyen de purger la perte et l'humiliation de l'Amérique au Vietnam. La purgation libère la société Américaine d'un syndrome Vietnamien inoubliable. Cet article aborde le traumatisme physique et la guerre immorale affectant les civils vietnamiens et vétérans. Il dévoile les séquences dramatiques de cette dernière sur la nature humaine. La guerre libérant, à travers Nick, une pléthore d'émotions complexes parvient à une sorte de catharsis.

Mots clés: vietnamiens, déshumanisation, vétérans, traumatisme, Vietnam

INTRODUCTION

The United States' war in Vietnam has been over since 1975, but it still lingers on many American citizens' minds. Unlike World War II perceived as a good war, the reputation of the Vietnam War is questionable. The main reason for this doubtfulness is that many soldiers come home severely traumatized. The coverage of the war, which has an impact on the public opinion, is at the core of Vietnam War literature. Set in a mythical Pennsylvania steel town, Clairton, and in Vietnam, Michael Cimino's epic of the screen tries to articulate the effects of the war in Vietnam upon American society. *The Deer Hunter* by Cimino is a Best Picture Winner and war film. This motion picture is an early attempt by Hollywood to process traumatic memories of Vietnam. It is one of Hollywood's earliest endeavors to grapple with the absurdities of the war while it was still an open wound for 1970s America. The film follows three friends from a blue-collar town in Pennsylvania, Michael (Robert de Niro), Steven (John Savage), and Nick (Christophe Walken) over the course of the Vietnam War. It is split into three parts: the calm before a group of Pennsylvania steel-workers leave for their tour of duty, the men's harrowing

spell in a Prisoner of War (POW) camp where they are forced to play a Russian roulette game, and the return home of Michael without his missing buddy Nicky. *The Deer Hunter* (1978) sheds light on a harrowing narrative and its ending remains as one of the most shattering pieces of cinema forty years later. The movie does not hold back from exposing the atrocities of combat and their effects on the human psyche, particularly for Vietnamese and Nick. It is a depiction of the most vulnerable character who disappears into the underground gambling world of Saigon after the war.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate war's disasters and agonies, which affect human nature. By delving into the shattered experiences of characters in Cimino's film, we realize that they become shells of their former selves with a fragile psychological state societies involved in warfare still grapple with. We highlight the damage the war does constantly to people and societies. Warfare robs individuals of their idealism and replaces it with cynicism and nihilism. It robs people of their humanity. According to Cimino, the devastating consequences of war tend to dehumanize civilians and soldiers because of its violent and cruel acts. War also disrupts social structures and institutions, leading to a chaos and a breakdown of the normal functioning of society. This breakdown can further contribute to dehumanization as people become focused on the scars of war. This crucial issue we attempt to address affects currently nations involved in world conflicts. The novel can be regarded as a warning about the atrocities of wars specifically in countries already involved in conflicts. They do not think of the emotional long-lasting effects they cause to innocent civilians, people and societies as a whole.

In post-Vietnam era, filmic narratives shed light on the lingering aftermath of war experience. Oliver Stone's film *Heaven and Earth* (1993) features the horrors of the war through the character of Le Ly Hayslip. It offers an insight into Le Ly's war experience. Stone investigates events that can be linked to trauma. From an early age, she witnesses acts of violence and murder, including the murder of her teacher who tells them to oppose the Vietcong. In *Apocalypse Now* (1979), Coppola gives a depiction of the war atrocities Vietnamese civilians are confronted with in the jungle warfare. This is shown when Willard kills a wounded woman in order to continue his mission without

delay. Thereby, he reclaims conscious control of his actions. The battlefield of the war has dramatically affected the Vietnamese. They are killed, massacred and tortured by the American soldiers. This film also represents characters who are affected by the horrific conditions of their captivity in camp. Coppola, through these events, deals with the maddening psychological influence of war on characters. *First Blood* (1982) by Ted Kotcheff is a representation of captivity experience. This motion picture is clearly unique in terms of the nature of the captive, captor culture, length and conditions of internment, attitudes toward the war. The environment of POW captivity typically combines a potent blend of physical hardship and privation as well as enormous psychological stress and trauma.

In this paper, the psychoanalytic criticism is used to provide deeper insights into the psychology of characters. This literary theory analyzes the causes of war from the psychological perspective. According to Sigmund Freud, the main cause of war is death instinct, which is completely rooted in human nature. One part of this instinct is in the body, which creates masochism. The other part is out leading to aggression and destructiveness and becomes uncontrolled impulse. During war, unheard and unseen atrocities impinge upon people's consciousness, either in fear or pursuit of excitement. Most people abandon their moral limitations, unleash their human rage and experience the pleasure to satisfying their instincts. For Freud, by using the psychoanalytic method, the real meaning of a text can be uncovered. In Cimino's *The Deer Hunter*, characters like Mike, Steven and Nick cope with psychological problems, resulting from the war experience. Steven is severely injured and disabled while Nick is mentally scarred and begins to play again Russian roulette. Cimino delves into Nick's instability when he points out: "he grabs the gun, goes crazy with it, pushes a man against the wall, and then throws all his money away. The depths of Nick's downfall are in the climax of the film: through physical appearance (he is sickly and pale), needle marks on his wrists (drug addiction) and action (he splits in Michael's face)" (Cimino 1978). This uncontrolled impulse leading to his death reflects the psychology of characters in Cimino's movie. The unconscious state of Nick results in aggression and self-destructiveness. Focusing on the mental disorder of characters in *The Deer Hunter*, Andrew Martin states that "the

Vietnam War has been a degenerative experience that has devastated the once-confident and boisterous male group” (Martin 116). Actually, the war has destroyed everything: Nick’s life, Steven’s legs and Michael’s role of a lone hero. Americans who stay home experience some pain due to war. This article examines the dehumanization of Vietnamese civilians and American soldiers and the purgation of American loss through Nick’s suicidal act of violence in Vietnam. At First, the study examines the aftermath of the war on Vietnamese civilians. Then, it delves into the lingering impacts of the Russian roulette game on the prisoners of war. Eventually, the reflection explores Nick’s death as a purgation of the American loss and humiliation.

1. The Aftermath of the war on Vietnamese Civilians

This section lays foundation for the physical injuries Vietnamese civilians are subject to because of the war experience. Actually, Hollywood is a representation of this conflict and shows the horrors of war that the American public cannot put up with because of its horrific images. Thus, villages are destroyed and Vietnamese children burnt to death. The event known as the My Lai Massacre is one of the darkest moments of the Vietnam War. This massacre leads to the growing antiwar movement in the United States, on March 16, 1968 since US army troops murder many unarmed Vietnamese women, children and elderly persons. When the facts of the massacre become known, war crime charges are brought against soldiers, resulting in pressure to end the war. My Lai also takes place during the Tet Offensive, but it is not discussed in the American press until late 1969. In this high-profile incident, a group of US Army personal is accused of killing Vietnamese civilians, mainly elderly women and children, on the suspicion that they are VC sympathizers. In this regard, we can say that Cimino refers to a similar atrocity in *The Deer Hunter*. In the first scene of the film occurring in Vietnam, Steven, Nick and Michael see a North Vietnamese soldier throwing a grenade into a bomb shelter inhabited by women and children.

Focusing on the aftereffects of the Vietnam War, we remark that the Americans are indignant about all the cruelties happening to the Vietnamese

citizens. These cruel atrocities are revealed through newspapers leaked dispatches. In his work, *A People's History of the United States: 1492 – Present* (2005), Howard Zinn states: “three out of four patients seeking treatment in a Vietnamese hospital afterward for burns from napalm, or jellied gasoline, were village women” (Zinn, 2005, p.477). This remark evokes the horrific conditions of the jungles that negatively impact on the lives of Vietnamese people. Zinn reveals the countless number of women exposed to the bombing attacks from napalm, which drastically affect their bodies. The cruelties they are confronted with result from combat exposure in Vietnam landscape. There are grounds for believing that the actual military exploits are even more horrifying than what is reported in the messages that reach home about pure massacres. In My Lai in the Quang Ngai province, on March 16, 1968, American soldiers force hundreds of people into a trench and kept shooting until all of them die. Zinn gloomily concludes this passage by stating: “My Lai was unique only in its details” (Zinn, 2005, p.479). Actually, Zinn gives deeper insights into the dramatic consequences of My Lai event. This attack affects tremendously Vietnamese and causes several casualties. Then, more facts about the Vietnam War come to be publicly known. Therefore, the American citizens make themselves heard through many incidents of protests. A great number of people are more affected and mobilized by this war than by most of the previous ones.

Besides, *The Deer Hunter* by Michael Cimino is a representation of the atrocities of war. For instance, the first part of the film is entirely set in the town of Clairton and it foreshadows the traumatic events in Vietnam. Despite the familiar atmosphere, it is among the scenes, which point at the impending doom of Vietnam. While focusing on the first part of Cimino's movie, we contend that this opening scene shows the men at work in the steel mill. The fire is really blinding and the sound is deafening too. It is impossible to tell them apart due to the protection masks or their black faces. And then, the fire and the unbearable rocket can be linked to the future bombings and helicopter whirring in Vietnam. The misery of the faceless steel workers and their loss of identity predict what they have to face during the War. The second part of *The Deer Hunter* is very confusing because it reflects images from Vietnamese huts that are destroyed, but the pigs that eat the decaying corpses

is one of the most shocking images. There is a soldier who commits atrocities against Vietnamese. He is seen creeping through the field, opening a hatch full of citizens. He throws a grenade inside and many of them get killed. There is also another wounded soldier, whom the viewer only recognizes as being Michael, is enraged by that cruelty. Michael takes revenge on the murder for committing such cruel acts by aiming a flame-thrower at him.

In attempting to examine the horrors of the battlefield, Robin Wood focuses on *The Deer Hunter*. From this outlook, he notes: “Cimino’s aim was clearly to convey the sense of horror and confusion through the abrupt and elliptical images” (Wood, 1986, p.271). In his remark, Wood brings to light the physical trauma of Vietnam War that is revealed through confusing images. Thus, this jagged representation can therefore be linked to the inability to orderly arrange the events while suffering from a traumatic experience. That is also illustrated by the fact that Nick and Steven are confused when the war breaks out. And they are reunited with Michael on this same scene. The “Last Gamble” scene shows Nick as a person who is overwhelmed by his trauma.

Francis Ford Coppola’s film, *Apocalypse Now* (1979), is a portrayal of the horrors of Vietnam War inflicted on Vietnamese. This happens when Willard’s men spot the air cavalry in action, clearing a Vietnamese village. Willard sets out to find the commanding officer, colonel Kilgore. As he leaps from boat to shore, in the background, a landing craft, with the head of a shark, emerges from the water and proceeds to swallow a Vietnamese hut, smashing it to the ground in its wake.

During the Vietnam conflict, the tactics deployed by the US military include the indiscriminate killing of Vietnamese civilians, the use of Agent Orange to destroy vast swaths of farmland and deprive peasants of food and livelihood. In addition, there are the bombing and napalming raids that destroy villages and leave the landscape largely unlivable. That has a devastating effect on Vietnam civilians and resonates with a long history of American atrocities that the discourse of exceptionalism seeks to disavow. Likewise, another landing craft swallows the surviving villagers who are rounded up by US soldiers on the ground and forced into the craft’s bowels to be evacuated. As a tank spews fire on other bamboo buildings, helicopters keep a watchful eye

from above. In this way, they surround and circumscribe the village, and oversee its destruction for not allowing anybody to escape. It appears the only building left standing is a church, itself a sign of Vietnam previous colonization by the French. The depiction of the horrors of Vietnam combat on Vietnamese civilians reveals that the devastation of the land and its people in the initial air-cavalry operation gives one pause to consider the human consequences of the American intervention in Vietnam.

Coppola's movie also uses a coordinated attack of sight and sound as Kilgore accounts for while flying into "Charlie's point," "we'll come in low out of the rising sun, and then we'll put on the music [...] I like to use Wagner. It scars the hell out of the slopes." (Coppola, 1979) This tactic to produce shock and awe, a term now used by the American military to describe their quick-strike strategies, is one that also works well on moviegoers. It is the impressive sight of helicopters in attack formation and the following explosion that leave us breathless in our seats.

More importantly, Coppola's movie delves deeply into the scars of war. Actually, the viewer is caught up in the spectacle of sight and sound in the second scene of the movie. He is dazzled by the effects and awed by the spectacle of war as seen through a camera lens. Hence, bodies hurtling through the air at the impact of a missile are no longer seen as bodies, but they are dehumanized. In all the excitement, any idea that war is hell tends to get lost. In *The Deer Hunter*, the final inversion is the substitution of the traditional happy and successful ending for one in which the protagonist's best friends are killed and maimed for no obvious purpose or positive outcome. In this light, John Hellmann argues that Michael's failure to rescue Nick is "nevertheless a crucial journey *The Deer Hunter* suggests America must make a return to its Vietnam experience to face the facts of its destroyed innocence" (Hellmann, 1982, p.428). Hellmann calls out for a return to Vietnam to realize the exposure of Vietnam War on the civilians. The destruction of Vietnam landscape is horrific as well as traumatic on innocent people's lives.

Oliver Stone's film *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989) features the exposure of war on Vietnamese civilians. During a patrol, Kovic's platoon accidentally

hits an allied Vietnamese village. There are several hurt villagers, including a surviving baby. The camera shows three wounded villagers and the baby. The baby is then staged in the center of the frame, surrounded by the villagers who appear dark figures, while light is shed in the baby.

According to David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, “this sets a scale of importance, emphasizing the protagonist or, in this case the baby, by making it the most frontal and clearly lit figure” (Bordwell and Thompson, 2008, p.126). Through this statement, Bordwell and Thompson reveal that this composition contributes to the idea that only the baby is still alive. It is an attempt to convey the disclosure of combats and the emotional scars on Vietnamese people.

Oliver stone’s movie *Platoon* is a portrayal of the naivety of the character Taylor who witnesses the brutality of his comrades towards Vietnamese civilians. In their analysis of this crucial problem, Leonard Quart and Albert Auster argue: “Stone understood just how fear, fatigue and rage could undermine some G.I.s’ sense of moral restraint and balance, and turn them into savages who massacre civilians and torch villages” (Quart and Auster, 2002, p.147). In this statement, Quart and Auster highlight the aftermath of the war Vietnamese civilians face on the battlefield. They are subject to American soldiers’ ill-treatments, including tortures, massacres and the devastating casualties of the war.

Another incident is also shown in a scene almost halfway through the film, in which the skull of an innocent Vietnamese teenager, as Trevor McCrisken and Andrew Pepper note, is “smashed to piece with the bit of a gun [...]” (McCrisken and Pepper, 2005, p.134) by a fellow infantryman, Bunny. In fact, McCrisken and Pepper measure the damages caused by the Vietnam War. The civilians are dramatically subject to the emotional trauma of the jungle warfare. Trevor McCrisken and Andrew Pepper further illustrate the horrors of combat exposure on civilians while drawing on Stone’s film *Platoon*. Like the killing of an innocent teenager in Stone’s film, they also complain: “a woman is shot in the head by Sergeant Barnes [Tom Bertenger] because she will not be quiet [...]” (McCrisken and Pepper, 2005, p.134). Such a dramatic event happens when Barnes, one of the leaders of the group, interrogates the

chief of a Vietnamese village, her husband, about the affiliation with the North Vietnamese Army. Through this shot, the viewer expects that Barnes shoots the chief's daughter after having already murdered his wife without even blinking. Focusing on these dramatic incidents and murders, Stone's Film *Platoon* conveys the horrors that both American and Vietnamese are confronted with during the war.

Post-Vietnam War film narratives depict American war atrocities. These movies explore the casualties of war that affect dramatically the Vietnamese people. As McMahon notes, "[b]y the early 1970's, stories of atrocities had become part of the national discourse, particularly with the publication of images from the My Lai massacre" (McMahon, 1994, p.14). According to McMahon, atrocity stories unveil that war can no longer be aligned with notions of duty, honor or national moral authority. America fails its mission in Vietnam because they are there to destroy the Vietnamese land and its citizens instead of protecting them. The atrocities of war impact on the lives of Vietnamese civilians, creating a sense of dehumanization in all levels of society. Focusing on the traumatic experience of the jungle warfare, Vietnamese, Cimino attempts to relate Vietnamese exposure to war. They try to grapple with the impacts of the war, but they are overwhelmed by the horrors on the battlefield.

2. The Russian Roulette game

The war has affected both Vietnamese and the American soldiers. Although veterans destroy the land of Vietnam, they are held in captivity and subject to suffering. Such a phenomenon is investigated in this section. Cimino's film, *The Deer Hunter*, sheds light on war atrocities. He deals with the acts of violence in this movie. Throughout the Vietnam conflict, the prisoner of war situation is typically conceptualized as a unidimensional experience with the return of veterans. Important factors are considered while describing the captivity experience in an attempt to understand the physical and psychological residuals of the Vietnam Prisoner of War experience (POW). Vietnam veterans who are held captive suffer an experience marked by the

physical deprivation and concern for personal survival. The war films feature the living conditions and the physical tortures as well as the psychological mistreatment American soldiers undergo. The Russian roulette game and the strong intentionality of the metaphor of the hunt reveal the random nature of fate, whereby actions have little effect on outcomes. “The game of Russian roulette,”¹ in which death becomes a matter of the statistical odds, thus mimics the fate of the American soldiers. They can fall victim at any time to the ambushes, mines and booby traps of guerrillas. However, by presenting the violence of the war in Vietnam as random and senseless, the game metaphor obscures the idea that war is organized and politically motivated.

According to Hellmann, *The Deer Hunter* inverts many of the Western’s cultural codes. Specifically, he claims that the notion of regeneration through violence “is stood on its head [in the film], for the regeneration results from the response of the hero to violence turned back on him,” (Hellmann, 1982, p.419) rather than through enacted by the hero. Cimino’s movie explores characters that epitomize an inversion of the traditional white superiority narrative of the Western. This reversal undermines the myth’s function since the Russian roulette game changes the binary structure upon which the narrative is constructed. Hermann provides deeper insights into this issue while underlining that *The Deer Hunter* offers the subversion of the Western myth. The final scene is an attempt to re-invert and restore the myth lost in Vietnam. This can be considered as the ultimate regeneration of a community whose lives are shattered by the war itself. The Americans still lose the war as symbolized in *The Deer Hunter* by their chaotic withdrawal from Saigon in 1975. Assuming the active position in a scenario of violence does not translate into gaining power over the political situation. The reversal of American and Vietnamese positions, in *The Deer Hunter*, can be better understood if we consider that the game metaphor alludes not only to the Saigon execution, but also to the My Lai massacre.

¹ www.dictionary.com (To gamble foolishly on a risky or potentially ruinous business. The expression refers to a deadly game in which a participant loads a revolver with one bullet, spins the cylinder, and fires at his own head.)

The game metaphor also produces the temporal elongation associated with the slow and deliberate hunt, building to the scene's singular and violent climax. *The Deer Hunter* seems to borrow from the news coverage of the events, surrounding both the Saigon execution during the Tet Offensive and the massacre in My Lai. The film continually shifts the roles within the scenario of violence. Americans and Vietnamese inflict violence on each other. Such permutations recall the structure of psychoanalytic fantasy and dreamlike, apt frameworks for scenes that Cimino himself deems surreal. The game takes place in a small hut where Michael, Nick and Steven witness only fragments of the events. The spectator's gaze bounces randomly about the hut and below to the prisoners. We see the body of the Vietnamese men falling to his death in three separate shots. They are interspersed with reaction shots of Michael and Steven, who can only hear the gory actions and of the other Vietnamese player. The blood pours out of the man on the floor, recalling the after images in the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) footage and Adams's photograph. These images match neither the eyelines of the reaction shots nor the points of view of the other identifiable characters.

In Cimino's film, when Michael and Nick emerge from their cage to play the game, the composition is the same as in Saigon Execution and in the previous death scene. The Russian roulette occurs as follows: Each player faces the camera, the gun directly to the left of his temple. The repetitive of identically framed images reinforces the centrality of the style and syntax of death rather than the specific narrative role that Russian roulette plays in the film. From this perspective, Christian Metz points out that "our identification does not lie primarily with film characters, but it is invested in the omniscient point of view of the camera." (Metz, 1982, p.20) However, in *The Deer Hunter*, the camera's position as an omniscient gaze is destabilized as a point of identification and mastery. The profusion of perspectives during the first the first Russian roulette scene is particularly disorienting so that identification is diverted from both characters and the camera.

In the final roulette scene of *The Deer Hunter*, Nick (Christophe Walken) commits a suicidal act. This scene alters the syntax of Saigon Execution, such that the object of the sentence that consists in shooting a man becomes reflexive: "I am shooting myself." (Cimino, 1978) Not only do the actors shift

among various roles when he commits suicide during the final Russian roulette game. The point of identification is further displaced from the characters to the act of shooting itself. This scene differs from the earlier scenes involving Russian roulette because Nick plays willingly the game, eerily drawn to a restaging of the death he cheats while being in captivity. His suicide offers a view of how visual traces of the oriental obscene are violently incorporated into the body of the American subject. The confusion of identities provoked by the Vietnam War pushes Nick to commit a violent act. He simultaneously becomes a shooter, victim and watcher. Although Michael's presence is superfluous to the game, it becomes a violent self-contained fantasy for Nick's staging. Nick's suicide occurs after real news footage of the Saigon evacuations. He dies by his own hands while playing the Russian roulette game. However, the violence he performs against his body is oriental in origin. It is learned first at the VC prisoner of war camp and from the Vietnamese gamblers in Saigon.

More importantly, these permutations can be described as introjecting the suffering object; fantasizing the suffering object, making the object suffer inside oneself and making oneself suffer. Michael Cimino draws on these different formulations. *The Deer Hunter* posits a violent self-dissolving fantasy in which visual fascination ends at a radical point of none being. In encountering violence both as radical and through the racial other, the American subject internalizes the visual style of violence and comes face to face with himself, thus simultaneously imploding and exploding. When Nick incorporates the oriental bullet, he exchanges it for the blood now projecting from his body. He completes his assimilations of the object model represented by the executed VC in Adams's photograph. Nick's suicide complicates the critique that *The Deer Hunter* is a mirror that reflects narcissistically American identity and values and ignores Vietnamese subjectivity. A crude form of racist dehumanization allows killings like those in My Lai to take place. In a structure that destabilizes human subjectivity so radically, what does it mean to dehumanize the victims of Vietnam War? Even if we are to rectify the representational politics of *The Deer Hunter* by restoring Americans to the role of aggression and the Vietnamese to that of victims, we cannot escape the permutational logic that flows from the primal act of

violence. After the Americans lose their innocence in the game of Russian roulette, there is no homecoming for the hunters, no healing of wounds caused by the war. In this marriage of violence, both the deer and the hunter are sacrificed. Despite the Cold War association of the Russian with communism and the explicit naming of the game in *The Deer Hunter* as Russian roulette, communism and violence are constantly displaced onto the Vietnamese. In keeping with the racial assimilation of other Vietnam War films, *The Deer Hunter* shows how the experience of violent adversity brings men together.

The Russian roulette scene, which is undoubtedly one of the most enduring images of the film, is taken almost directly from the Western or frontier myth. Myth-Making in the Vietnam War, subject to hideous tortures, is one of the oldest myths of American literature, making early appearances in the works of Puritan writers. The Vietcong grim, drink beer and bet money while forcing their captives to play Russian roulette. They exhibit thereby the cruelty, which is attributed to the Iroquois in the Puritan narratives. In the Puritan captivity, there are only two possible reactions for those who are held in captivity: passive submission or violent retribution.

Then, the second act, taking place in Vietnam, does not depict combat, but it focuses on the characters' experiences in a VC prisoner of war camp; they are forced to play Russian roulette one another. *The Deer Hunter* uses two metaphors to describe the Vietnam War: the hunt and the game. The first metaphor derives from the allusion within the film to James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Deer Slayer* (1841). There are similarities between the characters of Natty Bumppo in Cooper's novel and Michael Cimino in the film. Both characters are skilled hunters who experience war and they are eager to kill another human being for the first time. *The Deer Hunter*, the Russian roulette scenes cannot be understood through a lens that separates strictly reality from illusion. To elaborate on this, we turn to a set of concepts related to trauma and fantasy. The reflexive syntax of "I shoot myself" is a constitutive of the act of internalizing the scene of violence as fantasy. It is regarded as an object violently penetrating the subject. The scenes, depicting the Russian roulette game, have an uncanny link to an article in Life Magazine on My Lai. This article describes American soldiers torture psychologically the villagers before they shoot them.

Besides, reflectivity lies not only in the context of the fantasy, but it is also constitutive of the fantasy's structure, its relation to the fantasizing subject. The aggressive aspects of the fantasy, where in one inflicts violence on another, also reflects an inherent self-aggression. *The Deer Hunter* features the suffering of Vietnamese bodies; it also shows the American subject incorporating that subject. When the self and the incorporated other become indistinguishable, suffering emerges as self-inflicted violence.

The scenes, set in Vietnam, give a portrayal of the three characters that are tortured by the Vietcong. Robin Wood, in a generally perceptive essay, "Two films by Michael Cimino:" in *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan... and Beyond* (1986), describes *The Deer Hunter* as a film presenting the war as a terrible trauma, but it is dreadful because boys suffer so much. As in almost other Hollywood films about Vietnam, political analysis is totally repressed and the possibility that it is regarded as a war of American aggression or imperialism never permits to surface. The horrors of the Vietnam War are associated with the brutalities and confusions of American life. Everything seems ugly, careless and corrupt about it. The steel industry that is on the eve of being virtually wiped out in Western Pennsylvania only adds poignancy.

In the Russian roulette scenes, the Vietcong captors force the American prisoners of war (POW) to play the deadly game of chance against each other. In fact, this phenomenon establishes the general image of the enemy. The enemy is sadistic, brutal and malevolent, using helpless prisoners to satisfy his lust for violence and suspense. The brutality towards civilians is considered as worse than brutality towards prisoners may be or even more deplorable. Thus, the monstrosity and wickedness of the enemy is as great as or greater than in *The Green Berets*. In *The Deer Hunter*, the enemy is now able to cause permanent damage. The brutality of the enemy and the damage he is able to cause are central to the film.

While investigating issues related to the brutalities inflicted on veterans, David Desser emphasizes that, in the specific case of Michael, Nick and Steven, he is responsible for "a story of traumatic captivity", in general, he represents "Vietnam as a collective America trauma" (Desser, 1991, p.59). Desser sheds light on the characters' experience as prisoner of war. They are

held captive and the body tortures they are exposed to result in a traumatic situation. The central fictional device of the movie is the game of Russian roulette, which is a way of pretending that control is in one's hands when it is really in fate. And fate is cruel in this movie, destroying lives in the great purposeless war. That is the view of *The Deer Hunter*; and it is also the point at which the society has evidently arrived in terms of interpreting the war itself. In that sense, Samuel G. Freedman, in "The War and Arts" (1985), highlights that Vietnam movies concentrate on the experience of the American soldier in the field as well as back home instead of raising the divisive issue of the war in Vietnam and its rightness.

The Deer Hunter depicts the story of working-class polish-American men who voluntarily join the Army to fight in Vietnam where they are tortured by the North Vietnamese as prisoners of war. Despite Michael's efforts to bring him back, Nick remains in Vietnam, subsequently committing suicide during a heroin-filled game of Russian roulette at the climax of the film. The connection between the Vietnam War and the Russian roulette runs through the film, as Cimino correlates the way in which soldiers' lives are being frivolously risked by the American government for economic benefit. Players of Russian roulette risk senselessly their lives for the entertainment of the gambling audience as well. Furthermore, the Russian roulette scene draws a firm line between those who have the mental fortitude to maintain composure in a stressful situation and those who become overwhelmed and incapacitated by emotion when under pressure. As the Russian roulette proceeds, Steve grows hysterical and Michael must assure him that everything will be okay. When Steve breaks down, explaining that he cannot pull the trigger, Michael orders over and over: "go ahead! Show them you got balls!" (Cimino, 1978) Steve is not able to live up to this challenge. Moments later, Michael orchestrates an escape. His strength alone seems to guarantee the safety of his two wounded friends, the one physically and the other psychologically broken down as they make their escape down the river.

The climax, however, comes moments later when Michael and Steve fall from the rescue helicopter. While attempting to get Steve into the helicopter, Michael loses his grip from the bridge and both men are shown falling dramatically, eventually splashing into the water below where Steve's body

is shattered on rocks. Michael must now carry an incapacitated Steve because one of his arms and his legs no longer function. In this moment, Steve is completely vulnerable and unable to mentally or physically care for himself. He is depicted as a child gone limp fragile doll, being carried and protected by Michael. The physical breakage reflects his mental and masculine limitations, indeed.

Auster and Quart, in their reminiscence of Cimino's influential Russian roulette sequence, state: "in the brilliantly and manipulatively edited Russian roulette scene, which is filled with powerful reaction shots, a heroic, unwavering Michael wills himself and his two friends [Steven and Nick] to freedom as they slaughter their NLF torturers" (Auster and Quart, 1988, p.60). Through this passage, Auster and Quart illustrate the creative license Cimino assures in *The Deer Hunter*. For them, he creates such a traumatic scene so that the audience can be effectively convinced by the horrors that plague Michael when he returns home. According to Auster and Quart, Cimino's movie is a portrayal of the subjective experience of men like Michael Vronsky or Nick. And the central metaphor of the film Russian roulette moves it into still another direction. It turns the war into a self-destructive game of chance-probably true for surviving day-to-day combat but not much of an explanation of the causes of war. Unlike Auster and Quart, Cimino's intention is not to argue the causes of war, but rather highlights its effects. While using the Russian roulette scene as the instigating metaphor for the film, he establishes a theme, even though it is wrought with his historical inaccuracies.

By the same token, Jeremy Devine accurately describes the Russian roulette sequence as "able to convey the random aspects of combat death associated with war, the questions of luck and fate that haunted combatants and confound survivors" (Devine, 1995, p.167). Actually, Jeremy Devine brings to light the effects of Russian roulette on those who get involved in the game. For them, the emotional scars of war affect characters like Nick and Steven who are injured, but Nick ends up dead. It is the image of the haunted vet that Cimino portrays to the audience. The soldier who fights in Vietnam carries the experiences home, where they do not always translate into a positive re-acclimation.

In *The Deer Hunter*, the final scene focuses on the main character, Michael who is able to locate Nick once in Vietnam only to find him participating in professional Russian roulette tournaments. Cimino returns to the central metaphor of the film in order to re-create Michael, Nick and Steven's capture and subsequent torture. In finding Nick in the roulette tournament, Michael realizes that the imprisonment by the Vietcong has a far more intense effect on Nick than on Steven and himself. Cimino's film also shows, as the scene plays out, Michael who attempts to revive Nick's mental capacities. He reminds him of home, their captivity and the reasons why he should return home with him. However, Nick is unreachable because he is mentally incapacitated and unable to accept the connections Michael tries to make. And in a final act of desperation, Michael and Nick sit across the table from each other passing back and forth a pistol when Nick loses the game by shooting himself in the head. Michael then returns home with Nick's body to a somber community. *The Deer Hunter* reveals the horrors of the captivity camp. The conditions are horrific. The prisoners are kept in partially submerged bamboo cages under a hut. For misbehaving characters, there is one cage reserved that leaves only enough space above water to grasp for breath. The horrific experience that propels the rest of the story is the Russian roulette. The prisoners are forced by a maniacal Vietnamese captain to play against each other. Sitting across a table, with screaming guards, pointing rifles in their faces, they take turns gathering the courage to pull the trigger. The tension, in these scenes, is relived either by the click of an empty chamber or the ghastly explosion of a shot to the head.

The Deer Hunter is a portrayal of the suffering of Vietnamese bodies and the American subject that incorporates it. When the self and the incorporated other become undisguised, that suffering emerges as self-inflicted violence. According to Laplanche, the violence inflicted on the American prisoners of war is described as follows: "Introjecting the suffering object, fantasizing the suffering object, making the object suffer inside oneself, making oneself suffer: these are four rather different formulations, but our practice shows the subject constantly moving from one to the other" (Laplanche, 1976, p.88). From this reflection, Laplanche underscores the American subject who incorporates the suffering, which appears as self-inflicted violence. Both

American soldiers and Vietnamese are affected by this self-violence. In fact, Americans lose their innocence in the game of Russian roulette; there is no homecoming for the hunters and no healing of wounds caused by the war. The deer and the hunter are sacrificed in this marriage of violence.

Cimino's controversial representation of the Vietnam War reveals how violence figures an imaginary relationship between the American subject and its oriental other. The Vietnam War films do not only unveil a disruption in Americans' belief in our nationalist mythic narrative, but they also lay emphasis on the specific character of the deepening disillusionment of the time. In *The Deer Hunter*, Cimino highlights that the Russian roulette is a metaphorical device that allows him to explore the conditions of life, the notion of survival and the sense of being in a completely foreign and unknown country. The three Americans' experience, in the captivity, is one of the film's depictions. In his analysis of the traumatic experiences of veterans in Vietnam, Ernst Callenbach points out: the "one shot of Michael's hunting code becomes the one shot in Russian roulette, where dreams of power turn into a nightmare for Michael and his friends" (Callenbach, 1979, p.21). Here, Callenbach emphasizes the effects of the Russian roulette game on the western myth hero, leading to his breakdown. The notion of the one shot that makes Michael a powerful warrior collapses in Vietnam.

In Cimino's film, the cinematic rendition of the Russian roulette is striking and noteworthy. The enemy is often captured in medium shots and also close-ups. For Louis Giannetti, this technique used by Cimino tends "to elevate the importance of things" (Giannetti, 2002, p.13). Here, the enemy is no longer just a blurry dark silhouette somewhere in the distance. He is in focus, important, immediate, near and dangerous. Eventually, the film is again very distinctly black-and-white at least as far as the image of the enemy is concerned.

The Deer Hunter brings directly in front of the camera, in sharp focus, up closer, across the entire screen. However, the fact that the enemy is closer does not mean that he is made to appear any more human. Focusing on the cinematic techniques used in Cimino's movie, Auster and Quart claim that when "the camera gets sufficiently close to personalize, it sees evil and

contemptibility.” (Auster & Quart, 1988, p. 64) Actually, they shed light on the techniques Cimino uses to depict the ruthless enemy in the film.

According to Hellmann, *The Deer Hunter* depicts “Vietnam as a frontier landscape so hostile that America, having come as the hunter with dreams of omnipotence, is held captive in it and forced to confront the full implications of its impulses” (Hellmann, 1982, p.426). According to Hellmann, the reversal of the western myth is shown through the captivity of the three friends in Vietnam. They have undergone traumatic experiences, which are difficult to cope with. In his analysis of *The Deer Hunter*, Robin Wood seems to support the notion of inflicting violence on American soldiers in Vietnam. From this outlook, he argues that the film is thus “centrally concerned with the way in which the invasion of Vietnam by America is answered by the inversion of America by Vietnam as an experience, a symbol, a state of mind” (Wood, 1986, p.247). In this statement, Wood highlights the experience of America in Vietnam and the lesson they learn there. The final scenes, including the Russian roulette game, provide deeper insights into characters’ psyche. They disclose the absurdities and atrocities of war veterans, which impinge on US society. Cimino uses this game to convey the dramatic consequences of warfare on mankind.

3. The Purgation of the American Loss Through Nick’s Death

The Deer Hunter shows that Clairton is no longer a safe place that can protect the group from the war. In fact, this community is a pitiful refuge of the damaged and a defensive stockade within which the brutalized and bewildered attempt to deny the war and the effect it has upon them. The notion of God Bless America can here be replaced by a maudlin country and western song with lyrics involving crying in a bar and the need to forget all the hurt. Forgetting the wound and pain of the war is at the core of the depiction of Vietnam War movies. *The Deer Hunter* is perceived as a film that illustrates this idea. It assumes that if a community is to heal its members, it must be brought home.

In Cimino's film, Steven's physical mutilation causes him a passive submission. Michael purges his violent need for retribution by killing his captors. But by no means, he has completely and passively become submissive. Nick, unable to purge his need for violent retribution, eventually follows both, courses. The fact that Nick cannot call Linda, he turns his unleashed impulse to destroy back upon himself by playing Russian roulette. The final sequence deals with Nick's funeral and ends on a somber note of "God Bless America," signifying the "the devastation of a once-confident and boisterous" (Martin, 1993, p.116). The ending scene is a powerful example of the change when characters sing after Nick's funeral. The obviously patriotic song gains a new meaning in this context, a mournful meaning.

Unlike Michael and Steven, Nick violates the one-shot code agreement. Thus, he dies in Vietnam, a land where codes seem to have come permanently undone. *The Deer Hunter* does not only acknowledge the futility of applying American idealism in a context that draws upon different cultural roots and aspirations, but it also indicates that those ideals wither and disappear with America. The notion "*God Bless America*" (*The Deer Hunter*, 1978), in the final scene, is a counterpoint to American values. It shows a bitter comment on their failures, frustrations and indifference in the light of individual tragedy and sacrifices. The film ends up in melancholy and depression. In the very last scenes, Nick's friends sing sorrowfully God Bless America. And then they give a toast to Nick as another casualty of the Vietnam War.

At the end of *The Deer Hunter*, Michael Cimino underscores the friends attempting to reaffirm their community by singing 'God Bless America' at Nick's wake funeral. Cimino's intention here is to portray a group of characters who win through their adversity and somehow grow as a result of their experience. This scene conveys a clear message that Americans must forget. In that sense, Freedman points out: "the film ends not in sorrow but in affirmation, their friends sing "God Bless America" (Freedman, 1985, p. 56). The war kills some soldiers, but it serves to endure and reinforce, at the same time, the values and morale of the United States as a nation. While focusing on Cimino's film *The Deer Hunter*, we note that there is a contrast between De Niro's role, a perfect superman and his humane friends who are full of doubt and fear. Such a contrast allows a facade of demystification that shelters

a perfect complete mythical ideology, given the outstanding and spontaneous hero's performance.

In Cimino's film, the characters singing 'God Bless America' reinforces the filmic narrative. This song, as Robin Wood puts it, is "obviously the crux of the affirmation vs. irony question. The tone (and it colours the entire) is in fact one of the tentativeness. Dramatically, the singing develops out of John's collapse into tears as he tries to cook omelets, it is clear that he is weeping not just for the death of Nick, but from a much more generalized sense of loss. The song is his way of cheering himself up. It is then taken up by Linda and subsequently by the others, but the tone of the singing never becomes confident or affirmative." (Wood, 1986, p.289) In this statement, Wood reveals the idea that fundamental matters of interpretation in narrative can turn on how tone is understood. He lays emphasis on the song 'God Bless America' to articulate the use of cinematic techniques used by Cimino. Through this song, Americans express their affirmation and confidence for the loss in Vietnam.

Michael Cimino makes a film in touch with the collective unconscious of the mass that deals with the raw nerve in the national psyche. It is a film through which the US public's post-Vietnam needs to express their nostalgia for this lost era. Coping with war trauma gives way to catharsis and helps find some sort of redemption. Cimino's film does not only reverse the key images of the war, but it also helps to canonize US prisoners of war as the basic symbols of betrayed American manhood. Although the US soldiers are shown to be the true victims of the war in Vietnam, it is not their fault. For example, in *The Deer Hunter*, Michael is able to dominate nature with his violence in the mountains, but he cannot overcome nature in war because of the horrific and hostile conditions of the environment.

Ryan and Kellner share a similar view regarding Nick's attempt to live by the code, and finally, ending by committing suicide. That in this context they declare: "the reaffirmation of male military power in the character of Michael is predicated upon the purgation of weakness, vacillation, and the obsessively suicidal behaviour in which the country was engaged in Vietnam, all of which seem embodied in Nick's" (Ryan and Kellner, 1988, p.288). They assume

that Nick's act seems to purge the American male of his self-destructiveness and doubts. He epitomizes the failure of American identity and the demystification of western hero by killing himself.

In Cimino's film, *The Deer Hunter*, the acceptance of women like Angela and Linda in the male space is considered as crucial in the context of the breakdown of male ritual and failure of the hero. It also alludes to the destabilization of some of the masculine norms. Although they are previously excluded from male place, their reception is looked upon as a redemption and a reunification of the community shattered by war experience. In this regard, John Hermann, in his article, "Vietnam and the Hollywood Genre Film: Inversions of American Mythology in *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*," highlights that the western hero in Cimino's movie has accepted the loss and trauma, taking place in the community. This offers the opportunity to reunite, redeem and generate the community thanks to his knowledge. In this context, 'God Bless America' affirms a renewed belief in the future. It is considered as the first step in the process of forgetting the inversion of the myth and returning to the status quo ante. All of this helps regain the innocence that is lost in Vietnam. More importantly, *The Deer Hunter* examines the inversion of the American myth. The film, in no way, demonstrates that this reversal is to be a permanent transformation. In fact, the most likely response to such a defeat by overwhelming violence is to come to grips with Vietnam syndrome and never let such an event happen again.

Hellmann also explores the subversion of the western mythology in the final scene of Cimino's film in which the remaining characters spontaneously sing 'God Bless America' at Nick's funeral in the bar. For Hellmann, it is therefore a poignant portrayal of the western hero "accepting loss and trauma... [and] taking a place in the community" (Hellmann, 1982, p.429). The song of this group represents an attempt to come to terms with the inversion of the myth. By forgetting the legacy of the war and its aftermath, they can contend with the Vietnam syndrome and readjust to society. Then, Hellmann highlights that *The Deer hunter* features the deconstruction of the western genre and the national myth of foundation. This interpretation focuses on the folly of trying to establish control over the savage wilderness in order to save the Vietnamese, with whom they share the cultural characteristics and behaviors.

In *The Deer Hunter*, the final scene serves merely to co-opt women rather than suggest fundamental changes to the gender order portrayed in the film. Female characters such as Linda and Angela are permitted to play a part in recuperating and rehabilitating the American project. This is an invitation to participate more fully in supporting or re-invigorating a nationalist and masculinist US identity. The fundamental changes to the gender order dealt with in Cimino's film contribute to the reconstruction of the American identity. This resurgence of masculine power in the final scene of *The Deer Hunter*, as Susan Jeffords puts it, "reinforces a hope for an American collectivity through promises kept by men to each other" (Jeffords, 1989, p.97). For Jeffords, the reunification of men and women helps renew and restore the US identity. The film enacts the restoration of the moral community through gender values and offers an allegorical solution to the problem Vietnam poses to purge the source of defeat. Cimino suggests a way to renew national strength and patriotic cohesion. He depicts characters' s deep connection to their country despite their emotional scars of war. This releases complex emotions which result in a form of catharsis.

CONCLUSION

Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* represents the jungles of Vietnam War and its impacts on Vietnamese civilians who are dramatically killed, and their properties are totally destroyed. Vietnamese exposure to war puts the country in a chaotic situation, causing the destruction of the land and shatters the lives of its citizens. In addition to all the visible and measurable costs of the Vietnam War, the intangible damage on the nation's psyche and Vietnamese people is too difficult and huge to quantify. According to Cimino, the lasting impact of the war remains heavy. The effects of this human catastrophe on Vietnamese sadly persist for decades causing cancers, disorders and congenital diseases on younger generation. For the Vietnamese people and any observer who looks at the US intervention as an act of invasion, these troops are obviously viewed as victimizers who inflict on Vietnam massive destruction and death. The American soldiers who fight in Vietnam undergo emotional trauma on the battlefield. As the war wears on, many veterans are

held captive. This captivity makes them suffer because they undergo horrific situations as prisoners of war.

In Cimino's film, the prisoner of war's battle is not only a fight for daily survival, but also a struggle against physical torture, psychological coercion, boredom, humiliation, feeling of helplessness and extreme mental depression. The immediate and long-term effects of prisoner of war (POW) experience are featured in *The Deer Hunter* through the characters of Michael and Nick. Each captivity experience is clearly unique in terms of the nature of the captive, captor culture, length and conditions of internment, attitudes toward the war and many other factors. The environment of POW captivity typically combines a potent blend of physical hardship and privation as well as enormous psychological stress and trauma. Then, the impacts of consistent captivity appear across time and widely divergent setting and populations of POWs. The physical and emotional trauma of captivity is likely to leave a residue of psychic scar tissue that never altogether heals. The latency and degree of incarceration effects can be expected to be tempered by the time of capture and the duration of captivity. The extraordinary stresses of being captive and tortured are related to a heightened vulnerability to physical and psychological problems over the long term. The captivity of vets has traumatically affected them because they are subject to the hideous treatments and physical injuries of war experience. These dramatic impacts of the jungle warfare have a sense of dehumanization, affecting Vietnamese civilians and American soldiers. Nick's death serves to cleanse the scars of war. This shifts from trauma to reaffirming American values. By singing God Bless America together, the main characters, in *The Deer Hunter*, are able to not only bond through their shared experience but also purge a number of complex problems to achieve some sort of purgation. The cinematic techniques such as camera, photograph, music and mise en scene used in the film help unveil the psychological problems characters cope with in the jungle warfare. They give an overt interpretation of the emotional scars of the war. The film uses narrative and stylistic features of the western genre, including the black-and-white rendition of the conflict so common for the genre.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Auster, Albert & Quart, Leonard. *How the War Was Remembered: Hollywood and Vietnam*. New York: Praeger, 1988.
- Bordwell, David & Thompson, Kristin. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 8th ed, New York: McGraw Hill, 2008.
- Callenbach, Ernst. 'Phallic Nightmares'. *Film Quarterly*, 1979, 32: 4.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Introduction. Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. By Caruth, ed. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Caruth, Cathy. "Trauma and Experience: Introduction." *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Ed. Cathy Caruth. Baltimore : John Hopkins UP, 1995. 3-12, February 20th 2019.
- Caruth, Cathy. "Confronting Political Trauma." *CT Review* vol. XXVIII No. 1: 2006, p. 179.
- Coppola, Francis Ford (Director). *Apocalypse Now*. Perf. Marlon Brando and Martin Sheen. United Artists, 1979.
- Desser, David. "Vietnam and the Hollywood Genre Film. Inversions of American Mythology in *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*." *Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television*, Ed. Michael Anderegg. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1991, (pp.58-59).
- Devine, Jeremy M. *Vietnam at 24 Frames a Second: A Critical and Thematic Analysis of Over 400 Films About the Vietnam War*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 1995 Inc.
- Freedman, Samuel G. "The War and the Arts." *New York Times Magazine*, 1985.
- Freud, Sigmund. *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1949.
- Freud, Sigmund. *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Trans. James Strachy. London: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Giannetti, Louis. *Understanding Movies*. 9th ed. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2002.
- Hellmann, John. 'Vietnam and the Hollywood Genre Film: Inversions of American Mythology in *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*.' *American Quarterly*, 1982, 34: 4m.
- Jeffords, Susan. *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War: Theories of Contemporary Culture*, Ed. Kathleen Woodward, Bloomington Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989.

- Kotcheff, Ted (Director). *First Blood*, Perfs. Sylvester Stallone, Brian Dennehy, and Richard Crenna. Anabasis N.V. 1982.
- Laplanche, Jean. *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1976.
- Martin, Andrew. *Receptions of War: Vietnam in American Culture*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.
- McMahon, K., History, realism, and the limits of exclusion, *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 1994.
- McCrisken, Trevor B. & Pepper, Andrew. *American History and Contemporary Hollywood Film*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005.
- Metz, Christian, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton et al. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Ryan, Steven & Kellner, Douglas J. 'Camera Politica' in Ross, Steven R. (Ed.) *Movies and American Society*. Oxford: Blackwell, (2002 [1988]).
- Quart, Leonard & Auster, Albert. *American Film and Society since 1945, 3rd ed., rev. and expanded*. Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002.
- Wood, Robin. 'Two films by Michael Cimino', in *Hollywood from Vietnam to Reagan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States: 1492 – Present*. New York: Harper Collins, 2005.