

# JUMP CUT

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### Psychedelic soldiers and tragic surfers: John Milius' "Apocalypse Now" (1969)

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In November 1969, Francis Ford Coppola persuaded Warner Bros. to invest \$600,000 in his production company, American Zoetrope, to develop movies for "the youth market"—an audience that the Hollywood studios had managed to lose across the decade but that had recently returned to cinemas for the independently produced *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper 1969).<sup>[1]</sup> [\[open endnotes in new window\]](#) A year later, and much to the chagrin of the Warner executives who would demand their money back, Coppola would present them with George Lucas' *THX-1138*, and two screenplays: Coppola's "The Conversation" and John Milius' "Apocalypse Now." The latter was submitted to American Zoetrope on December 5th 1969, having already been in gestation for at least a year, though the film would not reach cinemas until a decade later.

Here I examine this first draft screenplay of *Apocalypse Now* and find that, like *Easy Rider*, its themes very much speak to nineteen-sixties U.S. youth in its providing a cinematic recognition of their counterculture. Dennis Hopper's film sought to reject the United States' genocidal movement across the "frontier" by reversing the direction of its motorcycle riding contemporary cowboys, Wyatt (Earp) and Billy (the Kid), from West to East and from capital to commune, in line with countercultural thinking. In contrast, Milius superimposes an internal conflict within Californian youth culture onto the U.S. military intervention in Vietnam, in order to critique such thinking.

As indicated, Milius' 1969 draft of *Apocalypse Now* differs in substance from the movie(s) directed by Francis Ford Coppola, of which there are currently four authorized versions in circulation: two 1979 versions (one featuring the destruction of Kurtz's compound during the end credits sequence, which the other—more widely distributed—version lacks), the 2001 *Redux* version that extended the movie by 37 minutes, and the 2019 *Final Cut* which reduces the running time of the *Redux* but includes alternate footage. Loosely based on Joseph Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness* (1902, in book form), both the original screenplay and the filmed versions of *Apocalypse Now* follow the protagonist, Captain Willard, on his episodic journey up river towards his target of assassination: Colonel Kurtz, who has gone insane and founded an armed cult amidst the chaos of the Vietnam War. In this connection, Coppola is keen to emphasize that "everything memorable of *Apocalypse Now* was invented by John Milius."<sup>[2]</sup> Coppola is referring here to all of the movie's key set-piece sequences, which constitute the various stops along Willard's journey. These set pieces also feature in the 1969 version of the screenplay:

- the Wagner soundtracked helicopter assault on a coastal village,
- the encounter with a tiger within the jungle,
- the Playboy Playmates' USO (United Services Organizations) performance to hundreds of sex-starved soldiers,
- the acid nightmare of the Do Lung Bridge segment,
- the reappearance of the Playmates, stranded without fuel at a Medevac station, as would feature in the longer *Redux* version of the film,
- and, as featured in both the *Redux* and *Final Cut* versions of the film, the visit to the French plantation that emerges from the mists as if lost in time.

Yet the key structural points of the filmed movies' shared narrative arc—its beginning, middle, and end—were largely re-written and improvised during filming, while the voice-over narration which weaves the various episodes together and provides significant insight into Willard's character was written by the journalist Michael Herr, author of the excellent *Dispatches* (1977), late into the film's two year editing process.<sup>[3]</sup> It is through this process that the filmed versions of *Apocalypse Now* came to shift thematically from Milius' original 1969 screenplay, rendering the latter a unique object of study that stands apart from Coppola's movies in the originality of its themes.<sup>[4]</sup>

The Vietnam War, Milius reminds us, "was fought by teenagers, who hopped up their helicopters and put flame jobs on the gun pods." In his estimation,

"[i]t became this sort of East-meets-West thing, an ancient Asian culture being assaulted by this teenage California culture."<sup>[5]</sup>

The writer-director's first draft screenplay, "Apocalypse Now" (1969) is committed to this theme. A close, contextualized reading of this unpublished work highlights a clash between his generation of "radicals," whom Milius aligns with surfers, and the counterculture of the late sixties—long-haired hippies whom he characterizes as psychedelic soldiers. My analysis finds that the conflict and dichotomy Milius presents between these two tribes of Californian youth culture relates to his coming of age within an early sixties surf scene that exhibited a sense of rebellion far different from that of the hippies that would emerge in the second half of the decade. The former exulted in thrills yet respected the norms of post-war U.S. society, where the latter sought to actively destroy them.

Further, Milius' characterization of the hippies in his original vision for *Apocalypse Now* communicates a fear of the counterculture that would develop more broadly within California across 1969. It is a fear that was born from the darker elements of such a scene, which were brought into harsh light via the Manson murders and the disaster at Altamont but that had been steadily intensifying within the shadows of the Californian youth culture.

With respect to scholarship in this area of film-studies, I believe this analysis of “Apocalypse Now” (1969) demonstrates the value of studying screenplays as textual objects in their own right, and I close with a broader critical reflection on the study of screenplays as autonomous works of art in light of the particular examination undertaken here.

### Surfing the South China Sea

The most famous sequence of *Apocalypse Now* is one in which Colonel Kilgore launches a helicopter bombardment upon a North Vietnamese Army (NVA) stronghold to the soundtrack of Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyries*, all in the service of clearing the area for surfing. This sequence features in the 1969 screenplay and largely unfolds in the same manner in the 1979, *Redux*, and *Final Cut* versions of the film. However, upon the troops’ landing on the beach, Milius foregrounds surfing in his writing of the scene where Coppola does not. Quite literally—Coppola shoots this aspect as a sight gag, with the surfers of Kilgore’s squadron, Mike and Johnny, rushing off into the background of the mise-en-scène upon their orders from the Colonel to strip and surf. The latter continues to dominate the foreground as he talks shop with Lance Johnson—a famous surfer among the boat crew that is escorting Willard up river.

Milius instead focalizes the scene through the hapless Mike and Johnny, the scripted direction finding the camera following them as:

*They walk through the shallows carrying brightly colored boards. They look very scared—Jets scream overhead firing cannons. [...] They edge into the water and paddle through the mild shorebreak.*

#### **FULL SHOT POINT SURFERS**

*They paddle up to the point in the calm channel—the beautiful waves breaking beyond them.*

#### **CLOSE SHOT MIKE JOHNNY**

*They paddle on their stomachs keeping lower—breathing hard and constantly looking around scared out of their minds.[6]*

Meanwhile Colonel Kharnage—the original name of the character who would be given the equally silly moniker of “Kilgore” by the time of filming—barks directions at them from the beach as Lance watches anxiously: “Maybe he’ll get tubed. [...] Maybe he’ll get inside the tube—where—where they can’t see him.”[7] After two explosions are heard in the water, Lance “looks up and out towards the point in horror” while Kharnage is infuriated: “They ain’t dead—they just missed a good set—the chicken shits.”[8] He commands them through his megaphone to “Try it again you little bastards,” as the surfers “come up near their boards and climb on—smoke hangs over the water.”[9]

The narrative arc of this episode begins with Kharnage’s self-characterization as “a goofy foot” and ends with Lance stealing “his Yater,”[10] imbuing the screenplay with surf terminology, such that the episode encapsulates Milius’ conception of the Vietnam War as “an ancient Asian culture being assaulted by this teenage California culture.”[11] The colonial appropriation of the beach demonstrates the forceful imposition of Californian culture upon the Vietnamese, while the story of the Vietnam War is rendered an exclusively American one in its telling.

Multiple facets of the surf culture of the young U.S. soldiers that were stationed in Vietnam are explored in Ty Ponder and Scott Bass’ documentary *Between the Lines: Surfers During the Vietnam War* (2008), which charts how the war impacted upon two surfers—Pat Farley, who proactively enlisted, and Brant Page, who attempted to dodge the draft. This content is described by Milius, who is the documentary’s narrator, as “the soil from which APOCALYPSE NOW grew out of.”[12] As such, Ponder and Bass’ film provides us with an insight into the context in which the screenwriter developed the theme of surfing within his 1969 draft of *Apocalypse Now*.

A number of the Rest and Relaxation (R&R) Centers—temporary refuge points provided by the military—were sited at beaches with “rideable waves,” and surfing gathered pace with the introduction of lifeguards who managed to convince Special Services to provide more surfboards “for lifesaving purposes.”[13] At one R&R Center, the China Beach Surf Club was established, requiring potential surfers to prove themselves in the waves in order to ensure the limited boards available were put to good use.[14] This Club was founded in November 1967 by Navy storekeeper Larry Martin, and by the end of his deployment, in early 1969, he had issued membership cards to around 180 servicemen.[15]

In the 1969 draft of *Apocalypse Now*, it is on China Beach (properly named Bãi biển Mỹ Khê, or My Khe Beach) that Willard first appears and is picked up for his mission. Milius’ writing about that beach is littered with signifiers of Californian beach life, and yet is imbued with an unsettling melancholy:

*a long stretch of white beach—dotted with hundreds of pale men in black Marine issue swim trunks. They lie on their backs in groups—there are no women—nobody moves very fast—occasionally we SEE TWO MEN throw a football laconically. The day is grey and overcast but hot. The water reflects the sky and there seems to be no horizon. A SMALL GROUP sit on surfboards off the end of a rock jetty as there are no waves, just an endless sheet of grey glass. The men are quiet and seem held in suspended animation or move in SLOW MOTION—held in limbo.[16]*

The milieu is subjectivized so as to give us the soldiers’ state of mind, which relates to this beach being located, as specified by the scene heading, in “DANANG, I CORPS”—meaning a Tactical Zone for the allied Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). This is to say that these zones of refuge that became popular surf spots for U.S. soldiers—the R&R Centers at China Beach, Chu Lai, Cam Rahn Bay, and Buhn Thuan—were never far from combat. As Rick Thomas, a veteran of the River Assault Group, U.S. Navy, recalls:

“I’m out surfing at China Beach, you know, just having a great time, and, uh, the next thing I know, the war comes back. It’s right up, a click down the beach. A Huey gunship

is, you know, just firing—lighting up the beach. And it was, you know, the most incredible moment because here I am surfing, just feeling the joy, feeling, you know, the goodness of life again, and, you know, death and destruction lies a mile down the beach.”[17]

Further, there were occasions when the teenage soldiers would make excursions further into enemy territory in pursuit of the best waves. Tom Luker, who was with the U.S. Marine Corps, recounts heading into “a Free Fire zone,” in order to surf what he was told was “this idyllic place, he said it comes in at A-frame, it goes right and left.”[18] Luker recalls handing over his M-16 for his turn on the board:

“I’m nervous as hell, I’m paddling out there, I’m thinking, all these thoughts are going through my head about, you know, is this dangerous, is this wrong—and a set just looms right up in front of me and without even thinking about it, just swung the board around, laid it down, two or three strokes into this bottom turn, beautiful wave... What war? What problems?”[19]

As Luker would state elsewhere in the documentary: “It’s the real *Apocalypse Now* shot [laughs] and we did it, we did it.”[20]

Beyond Kharnage’s assault on the beach, however, thematic resonances of surfing are carried throughout “*Apocalypse Now*” (1969) via the character who inspires the excursion —Lance Johnson, who is introduced by Milius as “a perfect image of the blond California surfer which he is.”[21] As Peter Cowie notes, in Coppola’s version of the film “Lance remains one of the film’s few tantalizingly superficial characters,” whose personality doesn’t extend much further than this introduction, whereas in Milius’ earlier drafts Lance’s background is fleshed out in “[a]n intriguing scene.”[22] In the 1969 draft, this scene occurs just before the arrival of Willard’s crew—which also consists of Chief, Mr Clean, and Chef—at Kurtz’s compound.

Countering Chief’s reading of Lance as “the great Malibu stud,” Lance explains he signed up for the war when he could have otherwise avoided the draft like his friends because: “My head was clouded by passion [...] I fell hopelessly in love—She left me and I wanted to kill myself —”[23] Ignored by his high school crush in the mid-sixties—“nobody cared about surfing then—it was all cars.”—he finally caught her attention when “[t]hey had my picture on the cover of Reef magazine doing a cut-back on about a 4 foot wave at Rincon.”[24] Lance undertook an affair with his married sweetheart, but she soon got divorced and ditched him:

“She had split from her husband and was living with an actor in T.V. commercials and his agent—What a bummer—Nam was my only choice. [...] Yeah—at least they tried to draft me.”[25]

Lance’s back story weaves together images of an idealized California, from its car culture to its surf magazines to its dream factory of Hollywood, and an intense teenage crush of the kind that would feature in many a pop record churned out from Los Angeles’ studios and labels. In this way, Lance is key to the thematic substance of Milius’ screenplay, informing a motif that runs throughout its narrative: “The tragedy of this war is a dead surfer.”[26] Lance repeats this aphorism during and after key moments of danger:

- when he is expected to join Kharnage’s surfers in the treacherous waters;
- following a tracer attack along the river, where bullets “rip chunks from the surfboard” he had stolen from the Colonel;[27]
- and following their escape from the “cesspool of hell” that is the Do Lung Bridg. [28]

In the closing scene of the script, the aphorism is instead slurred by a mentally deranged Willard upon finding Lance’s corpse the morning after the story’s climactic firefight: “He was the tragedy—the tragedy of this war —”[29]

The surfer soldier motif highlights the sense of lost youth and ideals that the Vietnam War would bring down on the United States in the late sixties, exemplifying one key aspect of Milius’ treatment of the Vietnam War as a war infused with Californian youth culture. The other aspect, which is placed in opposition to this sentimental conceptualization of California embodied by the figure of the surfer, is that of the psychedelic soldier.

#### The psychedelic soldier

The term “psychedelic” was invented by psychiatrist Humphrey Osmond to describe the effect of hallucinogens on the brain, and Camille Paglia submits that its transmogrification into “psychedelia” “remains the best word for the garish mental adventurism and extremism of the sixties” counterculture.[30] It is also a term that has been applied to the extended U.S. military intervention in Vietnam, particularly as the mid-sixties troop build-up saw the enforced drafting of America’s young and the communication of the conflict via colour television as it brought the war into their homes: “Culturally, the Vietnam War was a video war and, aesthetically, a psychedelic war.”[31] Coppola emphasizes this in his “\$30 million surrealist movie” through a number of visual and audio techniques—

- the pervasive use of coloured flares that fog up the frame,
- the piercing of fantastically bright lights through twisted milieus,
- and sounds that stretch from Wagner through megaphone speakers to an eerie synth score and a version of The Doors’ “The End” (1967) remixed specifically for use at the beginning and end of the movie, establishing symmetry between the protagonist and antagonist’s madness. [32]

Variations of such aspects feature in Milius’ 1969 draft of *Apocalypse Now*, but here psychedelia carries as a thematic charge a critique of the counterculture.

The first figure to appear in the opening scene of the 1969 draft is that of the psychedelic soldier, rising from out of the dirty water, much in the way Coppola would shoot Willard as he undertakes his assassination of Kurtz at the ending of his film. However, here

*“a helmet emerges—the water pours off REVEALING a set of beady eyes just above the water. Printed on the helmet, clearly visible in the dim light, are the words ‘Gook Killer’ written in a psychedelic hand. The head emerges REVEALING that the tough looking SOLDIER beneath has exceptionally long hair and beard.”[33]*

We soon meet the rest of this crew:

*“a smiling AMERICAN painted like an Indian,” another “wearing a jungle hat with a Peace sign on it,” and, in a shot that reveals their carnage—a trail of “smoking twisted bodies, fallen trees and charred leaves”—we come to “SEE the totally bizarre manner in which they are dressed. Some of them wear helmets, others wear strange exotic hats made out of birds and bushes. All of them have long savage-looking hair—bandoliers—flak jackets—shorts and little else. They wear montagnard sandals or no shoes at all and their bodies and faces are painted in bizarre camouflage patterns.”[34]*

Milius’ depiction of this “weird patrol” is a confusion of signifiers that conflates hippie aesthetics with colonial brutality, the latter of which—as explored further below—wouldn’t necessarily be negatively characterized by the writer if they were fighting for the right side.[35] Here, the discarding of military uniform/ity—both the clothing and standards of personal appearance—has fractured the image of a key icon of U.S. patriotism: the U.S. soldier.[36] The icon has become corrupted via a jumbled aesthetics: traits associated with enemies of the past (indigenous Americans) and native to their area of military intervention (the Montagnard sandals) along with adopting countercultural aesthetics (psychedelic design in the slogans and camouflage; hippie signifiers such as hair, bare feet and peace symbols). These are all incongruent with the image of the U.S. soldier and thus rendered by Milius as antithetical to being “American.”

The perceived corruption (as opposed to the positive development) of American values posed by the counterculture is more forcefully communicated via the psychedelic soldier elsewhere in the screenplay. For instance, on the PBR (Patrol Boat River) on which Willard makes his journey, the smoking of marijuana functions as an instance of male bonding among good old boys:

*“Why don’t you roll us a big joint?—I think the Captain’d like that.” Chief tells Lance, early on in their mission. “They all look at Willard uneasily,” but he swiftly diffuses the tension. “Take one a mine —” “He fishes into his breast pocket—pulls out a huge cigar-sized joint. They all smile—Willard lights up.”[37]*

Though drug use here takes on a ritualistic connotation in its own right, as entry into a brotherhood of sorts, the psychedelic soldiers later take this to its extreme—indulging in a cocktail of substances as part of a violent debauchery that invokes a religious fervor. This is evident in the sequence in which they await what appears to be their regular entertainment: an airstrike onto the surrounding jungle. “I dig this whole thing on speed—I’m a napalm freak,” a “long-haired killer with a helmet” tells Willard, while a

*large water-pipe is passed around with the finest hash. [...] One of the men chants the word napalm softly. Willard is too amazed to look [...] suddenly an orange ball of fire on the jungle floor below. The men tense up—another jet—tremendous flash and bright pink explosion. The men stir and talk to themselves—out of their minds—the show continues—Kurtz watches impassively. Bombs, rockets and napalm rips into the jungle below creating myriad bright balls of color and a hell of a lot of noise.[38]*

Paglia writes that “massive drug taking in the sixties, promoted by arts leaders and pop stars, redefined the culture and set the stage for the decade’s religious vision,” and this is evident in drug use by Kurtz and his soldiers.[39] At “the remains of the ancient Temple” that serves as his compound, Kurtz presents Willard with:

*“Marijuana—Hash-Hish—Opium—Cocaine—Un-cut Heroin—The gold of the Orient—enough there to buy four divisions. [...] The spoils of war —”[40]*

It is debatable whether the last word is a typo given that Kurtz’s spoils of war may very well seem to him to be the reward of a divine protection bestowed upon a chosen people. He tells a repulsed Willard that his “eyes have not yet grown accustomed to the light of the eastern sun,” and berates his guest and the America he represents—“you and your snivelization”—for thinking they “can judge our laws and our customs for ignorance is a steep hill with perilous rocks at the bottom.”[41]

Kurtz and his cult represent the section of Californian youth in the late sixties who had embraced both Eastern religion and “an ‘occult revival’ the likes of which hadn’t been seen in the West since the fin-de-siècle days of Madam Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society, and Aleister Crowley and the Golden Dawn,”[42] while rejecting the society that had formed on the basis of the economic boom of U.S. post-war years. This is perhaps best encapsulated by Kurtz’s early convert, Captain Colby, whose docket features a letter

*written in a scrawled savage hand to no one in particular. It reads:*

*Sell the house  
Sell the car  
Sell the kids  
Find someone else  
Forget it  
I’m never coming back  
Forget it —[43]*

A rejection of both commodity and the nuclear family, in Milius’ characterization this tribe—hippie radicals, essentially—“were once Americans,” but are now something *else*; blitzed on drugs and living among the “savage.”[44]

In this way, the psychedelic soldier of Milius’ “Apocalypse Now” (1969) functions as the thematic antagonist to that of the surfer, who represents an idealized vision of California. In reality, however,

the young surfers of the late sixties didn't draw such a contrast between their subculture and that of the hippies. For instance, Douglas Booth highlights how, following Hollywood's boredom with surf-related narratives, a self-issuing visual culture took the form of independently made "pure" surf movies, which began as instructive material for use within the surf community but would then take a subversive turn. These films, by directors such as Paul Witzig and John Severson, "increasingly reflected counterculture themes" through the inclusion of images associated with the hippie movement: communal living, psychedelic drug use, eastern religious influence and such.[45]

Further, between 1968 and 1971, *Surfer*, the premiere magazine of the era for the surfing community, was steered "toward its counterculture zenith like a smoke-filled van pulling into the parking lot of a Led Zeppelin show" by its young editor Drew Kampion; "a sharp-edged, Dylan-loving hippie kid prone to spontaneous acts of poetry [who] was pretty onboard with revolutions, shortboard or otherwise." [46]

Scott Laderman finds such "claim[s] to the countercultural vanguard" to be "bereft of serious political meaning." [47] His discourse analysis of *Surfer* travelogues finds these surfer-reporters mostly ignoring or disparaging revolutionary fervour in countries experiencing political upheavals, apartheid, and dictatorship in favour of simply riding their new found waves. This leads him to conclude: "It is not difficult to be a 'rebel' when one defines rebellion as simply choosing to surf." [48]

Nevertheless, the sentiment of a surfing counterculture prevailed, as Milius himself would admit forty years on from his first draft of *Apocalypse Now*:

"Surfers basically went hippie; Man of the land type hippies. You know, guys on Maui chanting their mantra, living off the land, eating blotter acid, surfing Honolua Bay and in their down time contemplating the ultimate Brewer gun." [49]

Re/defining what's radical

The clash between surfers and the counterculture present in the 1969 draft of *Apocalypse Now* is not simply Milius' invention. The opposition that Milius establishes between the surfer and the hippie relates to an intergenerational conflict between those who came of age in the early sixties, and those nearer the end of the decade. For example, in criticizing late sixties surf movies, Bernard "Midget" Farrelly—who in 1962 had become the burgeoning sport's first world champion— "accused film (and magazine) producers of betraying the sport" and, with their depictions of drug use, of "conveying 'a bum set of values' [that were] misleading many people, some of whom even 'died on the needle.'" [50]

In this connection, it is notable that Milius conceives of the surfer community as

"its own culture. It's peculiar. It's a tribal culture. It's not a part of normal society. We are different. We are branded. We can have jobs and everything else in society but we are different. It's a religion." [51]

This conception pitches surfing as both a subcultural tribe and an alternative lifestyle, but one which does not outright reject mainstream society—as was the case with the more committed of the hippies with their "tune in, drop out" ethos.

Such a conception of the surfer is communicated most fully in Milius' epic, biographical, surf movie *Big Wednesday* (John Milius 1978). The film follows a trio of surfers across four big swells between 1962 and 1974, each of which marks a key point in their journey towards becoming their own men: "That's the test of a surfer, to ride alone. Shouldn't have to depend on anybody but yourself." [52] What is of relevance to my analysis of the "Apocalypse Now" script is the manner in which three eras of rebellion are communicated in the first three chapters of *Big Wednesday*.

In the summer of 1962 depicted in the film, we are introduced to the young surfer protagonists — Jack, Matt, and Leroy — and their beach town friends. As the irritable manager of their local café hangout chides, they're "delinquents," who should "grow up sometime, turn into a respectable person [...]. The sport is a disease." [53] Reflecting on those times later, Leroy would refer to their friend Waxer as "the most radical guy I ever knew," because he drank a lot and "he had no brains." [54] This attitude is, of course, markedly different from the kind of "radicalism" that would come to define late sixties Californian youth culture—that of a progressive, and sometimes militant, leftism. And it is notable that this expression of early sixties radicalism is embodied by a house party at which Jack's mother sits in her bedroom reading Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1961): "The music's still too loud. Keep the pressure off my coffee table." [55] Even when a group of townies gatecrash the party and violence ensues, she is only mildly annoyed and mostly bemused by the roaring of the kids and the sounds of the furniture smashing below. In this respect, we find this film's trio exulting in a sanctioned rebellion, wrapped up in expectations of teenage masculinity, by which the family unit is never under threat.

As *Big Wednesday* advances, in the fall of 1965, we find that the beach culture has changed. Jack is now a lifeguard, a cop of the coastscape and rejected by the still "radical"—i.e. drunkard—Matt. Anticipating this change, Milius' local sage of the surf, a renowned boardmaker named The Bear, had cried at the close of the preceding chapter of the film: "They've already taken over the point. You'll be living under the booted foot of the lifeguard state." [56] The Bear is now a wealthy man, selling his boards out of an inland storefront, with his branding featured over a variety of merchandise. Milius here is communicating a real-world shift that occurred in the early sixties, which saw backyard operations transform themselves into localized surfboard workshops that functioned as "new commercial factories" serving a burgeoning "mass market for surfboard producers." [57] Matt, uneasy with this turn towards commercialization, finds himself conflicted over his sponsorship deals with The Bear:

"I'll bring back my board, I'll pay for 'em from now on. I don't want to be a star; pictures in the magazine, kids looking up to me... I'm a drunk, Bear. A screw up." [58]

Sponsorship and the professionalization of the sport indicate a mainstreaming of surfing, so that its supposed claims to radicalism, especially as earlier defined by Milius, are further diminished. [59] As such, in this chapter of *Big Wednesday*, we find that it is the young skateboarders that embody a

newer form of rebellion: “Cool it, you little creep.” The Bear tells one such brat, swerving inside his surf store, “Go on outside and run down the shoppers.”[60]

Milius does provide us with a sequence in which all but one of his surfer heroes attempt to evade the draft—feigning mental illness, injury, and homosexuality. However the next chapter of their lives, which takes place in winter 1968, draws a sharp distinction between these surfers and what had come to take shape as the counterculture. We find Matt, who successfully dodged the draft, meeting his wife Peggy at the aforementioned local café that was once their hangout. It has since been rebranded “Cosmic Café,” replete with psychedelic Hendrix poster and similar designs painted along its exterior, sitar music inside, perhaps intended to produce “cosmic consciousness,”[61] and what appears to be a drug burnout nodding out against the wall. Though Peggy finds the milieu amusing, Matt is uncomfortable among the café’s hippie clientele, pouring out ginseng tea on his table after his long-haired waiter rejects his order of a couple of cheeseburgers: “Uh, no, we’re off that trip, man. We don’t serve animal hostilities.” The waiter then accepts Matt’s angry order of two cokes but tells him “that’s bad karma, brother.” “Hey, I’m not your brother,” Matt tells him pointedly, “and turn down that crappy music.”[62] Such a sequence makes explicit the dichotomy that Milius draws between the counterculture of late sixties California and his conception of radical surfers—his “tribe” of early sixties pioneers, who took to the waves with drunken abandonment and cared for neither commerce or enlightenment.

#### Countering the counterculture

Milius’ rootedness in an earlier form of surfer rebellion is also exemplified by his public persona. The opening segment of a 2013 documentary entitled *Milius* features a range of colleagues, friends, and family members who describe him as having a rebellious disposition. The argument the film puts forward is that since the sixties counterculture had been the norm within his Californian milieu as he came of age, Milius instead positioned himself as a right wing contrarian.[63] Yet even if it is the case, as Nat Segaloff has suggested, that Milius “privately chafes at his public image as a gun-toting, liberal baiting provocateur,” it is also the case that “he allows himself to be painted as such, at times even holding the brush.”[64] I would suggest that Milius’ sense of “radicalism”—or his performance of it—is informed by that of Miki Dora, a key figure in the early-to-mid sixties Californian “[s]urfing subculture [that] played a crucial role in the development of Milius’ artistic personality.”[65]

As Laderman points out, “[s]urfers fancy themselves a rebellious bunch, and there are few ‘rebels’ more celebrated than Miki Dora”—despite his being “a notorious bigot with a soft spot for fascism.”[66] Dora was “the best known of the so-called surf Nazis who adopted the emblems (the swastika and the Iron Cross) of the genocidal Third Reich” and “tailed against” Jews, Mexicans, and African Americans.[67] Its notable, in this connection, that Milius’ trio of heroic surfers set out on the waves in the opening sequence of *Big Wednesday* using a borrowed surf board with a spray-painted symbol that could be, interchangeably, a Templar Cross of the Crusades or an Iron Cross of the Third Reich. It is also notable that such symbols of fascism would have been prevalent during the era he is recounting in the film,[68] and that he also pitches his heroes as knights slaying the dragon of the giant swell, as indicated by the triumphant fanfare on the soundtrack.

Milius’ approach to writing is imbued with the conflation of signifiers, often contradictory, such that he is able to simultaneously mock and praise ideological positions. For instance, Milius has described Kharnage/Kilgore as “a wildly drawn character—straight out of *Dr. Strangelove*—who, I must admit, I didn’t think would ultimately work.”[69] On the other hand, one of the character’s, and Milius’, most famous lines, “Charlie Don’t Surf,”[70] was inspired by an incident that he clearly admires:

“That line, he said was inspired by a published quote by Israel’s Ariel Sharon during the 1967 Six-Day War. A victorious Gen. Sharon went skin-diving after capturing enemy territory, Milius said, and declared, ‘We’re eating their fish.’ ‘That just really appealed to me,’ he laughed. ‘He was saying, ‘We blew the s\*\*\* out of them, and now we’re eating their fish.’ Charlie don’t surf.”[71]

What appears to trump either side of an ideological argument for Milius is his admiration of retrograde hypermasculinity. This is evident in the penultimate sequence before the battle that closes “*Apocalypse Now*” (1969), where we intercut between lengthy, supposedly noble, battle speeches given by both Kurtz and the “People’s Leader” commanding the NVA, which finally gives the Vietnamese a voice—albeit an equally cartoonish one.[72]

This bravado and tendency to conflate signifiers is also evident in Milius’ own confusing characterization of his ideological position: his declaration that he is a “Zen Anarchist.”[73]

Taken at face value, a “Zen Anarchist” should represent a peaceful person who believes in communal, non-hierarchical, governance... i.e. a hippie. But given Milius’ evident distaste for hippies, I believe he intends us to take this attribution to mean he is copacetic about destruction. This kind of provocative posture frames the 1969 screenplay of *Apocalypse Now* via its “Author’s Note,” in which he describes two war protestors’ attempt to dissuade a company of young paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division from “embark[ing] on their great adventure.”[74] The hippies are clearly the subjects of mockery in Milius’ anecdote—their misguided ideals are thrown in their faces, or smashed upon their heads, in a slapstick fashion: “the Texan took off his steel helmet and bashed the long-haired youth over the head causing a dull metallic clang.”[75] The “entire company” takes responsibility for this assault when reprimanded by a sergeant, and Milius closes this story as so:

“This stunning show of esprit de corps did not impress the injured hippie who said, ‘Animals, just a bunch of animals.’ His friend looked at them in awe and replied, ‘Just think what they’ll be like when they come back.’”[76]

While the “awe” expressed by the second hippie communicates an overwhelming dismay that people like this—those who exult in “injustice and brutality”—exist, the author expresses that *he* is in awe of the “stunning show of esprit de corps.”[77] And this awe on the part of the author subdues the possibility here of a critical stance towards the soldiers. They may be “animals” who will be psychotic upon their return, but Milius indicates that he is relaxed with such an idea.

Milius' apparent self-characterization as a "Zen Anarchist" brings us back to the provocateur posture people attributed to Dora, when they didn't want to admit the reality of his bigotry.[78] And, as in the 1968 chapter of *Big Wednesday*, when its pioneering protagonists are heckled at a screening of an independent surf movie, by the late sixties this form of rebellion had similarly become outdated. Milius would express this sentiment in an interview years later, pointing out that while many surfers had aligned themselves with the counterculture:

"the other significant part of surfing during that time was people like [Pat] Farley. The surf media just didn't publicize it. Surfers going to war for their country? What? They were viewed as slightly un-hip." [79]

In this respect, the positioning of the hippie counterculture as the enemy in "Apocalypse Now" (1969) reflects Milius' rage against the usurpers of his surfer tribe; a theme he would communicate more explicitly with *Big Wednesday*. However, his characterization of hippies as the psychedelic soldiers of Kurtz's cult is fascinating for a further reason—it resonates with the perceived state of the Californian counterculture at the end of the sixties.

Nirvana Now

The darker undercurrent of sixties California would come to wash over the state in terrifying ways. Somewhat bizarrely, the December 5th 1969 dated first draft screenplay of *Apocalypse Now* both coincides and resonates with the two key events that would bury the hippie counterculture in the mainstream imaginary: the arrest of Charles Manson on December 2nd for the August murders of Sharon Tate and her friends, and The Rolling Stones' concert at Altamont on December 6th.

The Altamont Speedway Free Festival was a free concert held in northern California by British rock band The Rolling Stones. It was pitched by the band's frontman as an attempt at "creating a sort of microcosmic society, which sets an example for the rest of America as to how one can behave in large gatherings." The press were quick to label it a "Woodstock West," anticipating a utopian day of peace and love.[80] Poorly organized due to a last minute location change, however, John McMillian writes of how far from utopia it was:

"Altamont proved to be a dirty, bleak space for a rock festival, almost completely lacking in amenities for the 300,000 concertgoers. People practically clambered over each other to get near the hastily built, three-foot high stage, and by almost every account, 'bad vibes' were regnant among the concertgoers." [81]

Further, continuing what Martin Rubin describes as an "unholy alliance' between pacifist middle-class bohemians and neo-fascist lumpen bikers" that had seen the Hell's Angels "bec[o]me fixtures in the Haight-Ashbury, hanging out regularly at Benches Pizza Parlor, scoring drugs and women, [and] sometimes acting as a kind of unofficial police force at various hippie functions," the Stones had hired the motorcycle gang as stage security at the concert.[82]

Fueled by the drink and drugs they were paid in, the Angels instead went on a rampage. Beating hippies with weighted pool cues and heavy boots, as the day rolled on even the support acts got their share of the violence, with a performer being "knocked out by a Hells Angel when [he] attempted to stop an Angel from beating up a black audience member right in front of the stage." [83] The violence would peak with the Angels' murdering a teenager mere feet from the stage as the Stones performed.

Paglia has cited rock music as a key element in the counterculture's religious turn:

"the titanic, all-enveloping sound of rock was produced by powerful, new amplification technology that subordinated the mind and activated the body [...] Through the sensory assault of that thunderous music, a whole generation tapped into natural energies, tangible proof of humanity's link to the cosmos." [84]

However, Paglia concludes, while "[t]he basic principle of the counterculture began as communality," it "ended as the horde, the most primitive entity in social history," and this was reflected in both the "restless, bickering mob" of Altamont and its sounds.[85] The Stones' occult-influenced songs emphasized the "darker blooms of the summer of love," [86] and Altamont demonstrated that "rock and roll was getting back to its roots in impulse and violent assertion." [87]

Paglia's characterization of rock and roll very much aligns with how it is received by Milius' psychedelic soldiers. If the climax of the sixties counterculture is said to have been the drug-fuelled orgiastic violence of the Hell's Angels, set to a soundtrack of the Stones,[88] Milius' original vision of *Apocalypse Now* anticipates this with its climax of a drug-fuelled orgiastic slaughter, set to a soundtrack of The Doors.

"All manner of drugs are distributed—water pipes with hash-hish—Americans eating grass—injecting speed—sniffing cocaine" as the NVA approach to destroy Kurtz's compound; their "lust for blood aroused[,] 200 Montagnard and 15 Americans prepare to do battle with an entire army." [89]

And the rock and roll soundtrack is key to the horrific violence that will ensue. Colby informs Kurtz that they "have dual tapes underground—If one is hit the other will continue to play," [90] and as the proximity between the two sets of enemies collapses the sky suddenly becomes

"bright with flares which produce a weird psychedelic light and blared out at tremendous volume over and above the dim of battle are the Doors singing 'Light My Fire.' [...] The Americans and Montagnards stand up screaming—obviously this is their battle song—they charge up—M-16's in both hands—blasting—kicking—bayonetting—gouging eyes—slitting throats—biting necks, both sides collide." [91]

The use of The Doors, a key band of the Californian counterculture, in this ultraviolet sequence intensifies its resonance with the reality of the movement's decline into chaos in 1969.

This draft of the screenplay was submitted just a day before the horrific events at Altamont. Only a few days earlier, on Dec 2nd, Charles Manson and several members of his cult had been arrested for

their two-day murder spree of the previous August—another instance of the “optimistic sixties saga degenerat[ing] into horrifying incidents of group psychology.”[92]

Manson was an ex-convict who would ingratiate himself within the hippie scene of Haight-Ashbury following his release from prison in 1967, before attempting to do the same in Hollywood in pursuit of a recording career. Across August 8-10, 1969, Manson would order his cult of mostly young women—known as TheFamily—to commit two slaughters in a ritualistic fashion as apparent revenge for his failure to gain a record contract and/or an attempt to instigate an apocalyptic race war.

The filmed versions of *Apocalypse Now* acknowledge these murders when Clean, one of the members of Willard’s PBR crew, reads from a news clipping received as part of a package from home: “. . . Charles Miller Manson ordered the slaughter of all in the home anyway, as a symbol of protest.’ That’s really weird, ain’t it?”[93] John Hellman perceives the filmed version of Kurtz as “a version of the 1970s guru [...] an ominous cultleader” of the kind that Manson would model and anticipate as that decade unfolded.[94] Yet, even though Manson had only vaguely—if shockingly—entered public consciousness in the announcement of his arrest three days before the submission of the 1969 draft of *Apocalypse Now*, it is notable that Milius’ Kurtz follows the very same model of this cult leader. [95]

Just as Manson had convinced his followers that he was Jesus Christ,[96] this “*tall powerful man wearing a tattered green beret, flak jacket and loincloth*” reigns over his ancient temple as a God. [97] Though he insists that he is working for God and is under his will and direction,

“[w]ild looking savages man these guns and bow and praise Kurtz as he passes,”  
before a “*woman rushes up to Kurtz and on her knees grasps his hand and kisses it. He reaches down imperiously and strokes her hair. She smiles as if healed and blessed and runs back to her bunker.*”[98]

As with Manson’s Family of mostly young women, Kurtz has what he calls

“my concubine pit—where women never see the light of the day. They eat, sleep and bear children in the same room. They only leave when they go to be buried—Yet they are content.”[99]

And just as Manson would farm out his women to music industry figures, such as Dennis Wilson of The Beach Boys, and supply them with drugs in order to gain his elusive record contract,[100] Kurtz uses the same method to convert Willard’s men, amongst others, to his cause. “They have a vice for the Indian hemp. [...] They are pacified,” a Lieutenant informs him of a set of prisoners, while Chief, who has also joined Kurtz’s cult, explains more plainly to the former leader of his former mission: “they gave us a lot of good grass and some women.”[101]

Reflecting the acid fascism of Manson, Kurtz espouses extreme justice—“The pleasure of crime is momentary - its punishment eternal.” And the most striking alignment between the Kurtz of the 1969 script and Charles Manson is their respective visions of war and revolution.[102] Manson famously conceived a convoluted white supremacist revolution he called “Helter Skelter,” after the Beatles song. This involved impoverished black people striking out against rich white people, committing vicious murders in neighborhoods like Beverly Hills (in reality, Manson would instruct his Family to undertake such killings), which would create “mass paranoia among the whites” who would then indiscriminately slaughter black people in response.[103] The African American radicals—the Black Panthers and Black Muslims—would have been in hiding, subsequently re-emerging to cause a fracture within white America by guilt-tripping the “hippie-liberals” and setting them on a warpath with “uptight conservatives,” resulting in a “War between the States, brother against brother, white killing white.”[104] Following this second massacre, the African American radicals would return and kill the remaining whites. After all this, the Manson Family would re-emerge from their “refuge in the bottomless pit in Death Valley” and enslave the African Americans, having “now grown to 144,000, as predicted in the Bible—a pure, white master race,” leaving Manson to “rule that world.”[104]

Milius’ Kurtz similarly plans for his people to re-emerge from their redoubt of the ancient temple following the destruction of the rest of the world:

“these gates are two thousand years old—the stone is only hardened by  
the sun—the metal of your machines will rust and return to the earth  
before these rocks grow a shade darker.”[106]

However, he notes that his enemies are already “too busy destroying themselves—and when they are through—we shall emerge—[...] patience—it is our greatest weapon.”[107] Further, for all his delusional bluster, his timescale is far more realistic, stretching across several generations:

“Some day we shall retake what is ours but it will not be in our lifetime nor yet in that of our children’s children so God has given us patience.”[108]

The resonances are striking but I would suggest that the above linkages between Manson and the 1969 version of Kurtz are as coincidental as that of the screenplay’s alignments with *Altamont*. While Coppola had headed out to “San Francisco, epicentre of the counterculture,” to set up American Zoetrope,[109] Milius had remained in Los Angeles, where Manson had been making inroads within the Hollywood in-crowd.[110] However, I would suggest that it is unlikely that Milius, as a recent University of Southern California graduate and fledgling screenwriter, would have crossed-paths with Manson as he cavorted with the celebrities of a Hollywood that was coming to a close. Further, though at least one biker film of a series made by American International Pictures to which Milius had contributed had been shot at Spahn Ranch in the presence of the Manson Family, if the writer had met its leader there, such an incident would surely have emerged in an interview by now, especially given his inclination towards a good anecdote.[111]

Nevertheless, the above resonances are telling as they communicate Milius’ general unease at the way in which the hippie counterculture had been unfolding, and would eventually unravel in these two horrific incidents—an unease shared in many accounts of that era.



For example, Brant Page, the aforementioned surfer who spent 1968 fleeing the draft board, recalls stopping by at Haight-Ashbury

“to look for some LSD. What seemed like a groovy, wonderful, movement of a new culture of new experimentations of life turned out to be just another war [...] because people started bringing in all these horrible drugs, cops were everywhere trying to bust people, they hated the hippie movement. I had to just get out of town.”[112]

Of the political strands of this movement, McMillian writes that by the summer of the following year, Students for a Democratic Society

“the most powerful student organization in American history—destroyed itself in a paroxysm of factional infighting between Weatherman, an obnoxious clique of ultramilitants who drew their name from a Bob Dylan lyric, and the Progressive Labor Party, an equally unpleasant, doctrinaire neo-Marxist organisation.” [113]

Further, while Hellmann argues that Manson’s arrest and subsequent notoriety “marked the coming into public consciousness of the gurus and cult compounds that in the 1970s replaced egalitarian communes,” the reason Milius could conceive of Kurtz in so similar a way was because such cults were nevertheless already present, replete with charismatic, messianic, leaders, in late sixties California.[114] For instance, Jim Jones, who would murder his thousand followers at his Jonestown compound in Guyana in 1979, had built up his church with a mostly African American congregation “drawn from San Francisco at the height of the hippie era.”[115] Manson had himself passed through a number of such Californian cults, most notably The Process: The Church of the Final Judgement, the Solar Lodge, and the Fountain of the World, which, respectively, helped him to develop his ideas of a duality between Jesus and Satan (“Christ to judge, Satan to execute judgement”), the coming of an apocalyptic race war and recruitment through sex and drugs, and the use of messianic motifs and rituals.[116] The point is that each of these elements were in circulation across California in myriad forms amongst the “seekers,” or the mystically inclined, of the sixties counterculture.

However, in the summer of 1969, these darker elements would seep into mainstream consciousness following the headline grabbing ritualistic killings of Sharon Tate and the La Biancas. No perpetrators would be identified for several months and rumours abounded as to who could have committed the crime. As Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry put it, a “cloud of fright hung over southern California more dense than its smog.”[117] The main suspects in the mind of the public appeared to have been drug-fuelled, sex-crazed, deviants—with Tate’s father even

“[g]rowing a beard and letting his hair grow long, [...] frequenting the Sunset Strip, hippie pads, and places where drugs were sold, looking for some leads to the killer(s).”[118]

Such suspicions wouldn’t be too far from the truth, insofar as the Manson Family was a hippie cult, but it had tarnished an entire movement of seekers of cosmic consciousness.[119] “As the summer of 1969 lengthened,” Robert Stone recalls,

“there was a whole lot of shaving going on in Los Angeles. Good-humored tolerance of the neo-bohemian scene was suspended, and whatever it was was not funny. Fear inhibited.”[120]

It is within this context that the 1969 draft of *Apocalypse Now* was written, and Milius’ characterization of Kurtz and his weird makeshift tribe resonates with this fear and paranoia around the more radical elements of the counterculture—whether mystical or political, or a convergence of both. In fact, Milius’ dialogue clearly makes the analogy between Kurtz’s Helter Skelter-esque revolution and the supposed threat of the hippie radicals to the stability of the United States—the youth’s rising in anger at their country’s drawn out military intervention in Vietnam and their outright rejection of U.S. society:

“Do you see that man at the well - When one bucket empties the other fills - So it is with the world - At present you are all full of power but you are spilling it slowly and wastefully and we are lapping up the drops as they spill from your bucket -”[121]

In this connection, and in another conflation of seemingly contradictory signifiers, we can consider the story’s title. Milius explains that the title of his script

“came from the buttons hippies wore that said NIRVANA NOW with a peace symbol. I made one with a tail and engine nasals, so that the symbol became a B-52, and read APOCALYPSE NOW. As a matter of fact, I put it on one of my boards.”[122]

Despite their seemingly divergent connotations of peace and violence, the two slogans are technically imploring the same thing: an end to the world as we know it, and the grasping of a knowledge previously withheld.

Conclusion / critical reflections on the study of the screenplay

Coppola’s filmed versions of *Apocalypse Now* use the attraction-repulsion of Willard and Kurtz to communicate the central theme of an American schizophrenia produced by the U.S. intervention in Vietnam—desperate to dominate and win this decades-long war, whilst simultaneously seeking to maintain the nation’s self-image as a just and powerful force of good.[123] I have demonstrated how Milius’ original screenplay is instead focused on an internal conflict within the Californian youth culture of the late nineteen-sixties, an imagined clash between two oppositional tribes that he has superimposed upon the Vietnam War. This conflict, really an intergenerational tussle between the writer and the left-leaning upstarts that had subverted his beloved surf culture, provides us with a unique insight into the complexities of U.S. subculture during a period that has been otherwise addressed innumerable times. It also bestows Milius’ first draft screenplay with an originality of theme, content, and subtext that distinguishes it from both Conrad’s source novella and Coppola’s films.

In elucidating these themes through a close, and contextualised, analysis of “Apocalypse Now” (1969), I contribute to a strand of scholarship that seeks to establish screenplays as objects worthy of study in their own right.[124] And, in doing so, I must also necessarily address the ontological debate surrounding the screenplay within both literary and film scholarship. This is because, as Barbara Korte and Ralf Schneider write, “[i]f a screenplay is read for its own value, it has reached the greatest possible degree of independence from the film,” and such autonomy is important given that the screenplay has often been considered “a generic and intermedial hybrid that occasionally aspired to literary status but could not really claim the artistic ‘autonomy’ of ‘real’ literature such as a novel or poem.”[125] This position, which considers the screenplay to be an intermedial form, has been attributed to Noel Carroll, Jochen Brunow, and Pier Paolo Pasolini, with the latter commonly cited as having provided a key formulation of this critique, as per Jerónimo Arellano:

“At the heart of these dismissals lies the questions of the ontological status of the screenplay text as an incomplete or intermediary form—a ‘structure that wants to be another structure,’ in Pier Paolo Pasolini’s much-cited words—and the nature of authorship in an art form that is destined to be transformed into another.”[126]

However, I would suggest that this is a mischaracterization of Pasolini’s analysis of the ontological status of the screenplay, which—on the contrary—posits a strong counter to such negative characterizations of the art form. His above, oft-cited words appear in a text in which Pasolini formulates an original conception of the screenplay—or “screenplay-text”—that positions the art form as distinct from both literature and cinema. The screenplay-text constitutes “the sign of another linguistic system” in its production of images within the mind of the reader, whilst also incorporating the structures of both literature and cinema on the level of its text:

“the word of the screenplay is thus, contemporaneously, the sign of two different structures, inasmuch as the meaning that it denotes is double: and it belongs to two languages characterized by different structures.”[127]

To put it another way, it is its technique of “alluding to meaning”—which is communicated through mental images—“through two different paths, simultaneous and converging”—that of the “normal path of all written language” and another that “forward[s] the addressee to another sign, that of the potential film”—that renders the screenplay “an autonomous ‘technique,’ a work complete and finished in itself.”[128]

Explaining this distinctive nature of the screenplay within a semiotic context, Pasolini writes of how, while the “sign is at the same time oral (phoneme), written (grapheme), and visual (kineme)” and “we always have simultaneously present these different aspects of the linguistic ‘sign,’ which is therefore one and three,” the coordination of these aspects differ with respect to the reading of literary texts and the screenplay-text.[129] Symbolist poetry, for instance, “requires us to cooperate by ‘pretending’ to hear those graphemes acoustically,” such that “it sends us back to the phonemes, which are simultaneously present in our mind even if we are not reading aloud,” meaning we follow two simultaneous paths that come to be integrated in the act of reading: “the normal sign-meaning and the abnormal sign-sign-as-phoneme-meaning.”[130]

The screenplay-text, however, finds the reader integrating “the incomplete meaning of the writing of the screenplay, following two paths, the normal sign-meaning, and the abnormal sign-sign-as-kineme-meaning.”[131] The latter path relates to the production of mental images within the reader, which occurs through the reading of a screenplay’s written words (the first path). “The image is born of the coordination of the kinemes,” and it is this production of the mental image—or “im-sign”—that renders the screenplay-text an autonomous work of art: “the ‘kineme,’ which separated from the other two aspects of the word, has become an autonomous, self-sufficient sign.”[132]

The screenplay-text is an autonomous work of art, and its autonomy is found in its functioning as a dynamic movement between the two structures of the literary and cinematographic, in the self-contained fashion of “a process which does not proceed.”[133] This is to say that while a substantive element of the form of the screenplay is its “allusion to a ‘potential’ visualizable cinematographic work,” this potential cinematographic work need not be realised for the screenplay to be considered a complete and finished work.[134] All that is required is its ability to project cinematic images within the reader’s mind on the basis of its written text:

“The technique of scriptwriting is predicated above all on this collaboration of the reader: and it is understood that its perfection consists in fulfilling this function perfectly. Its form, its style, are perfect and complete when they have included and integrated these necessities into themselves.”[135]

It is in this respect that “the sign of the screenplay-text is presented as the sign that expresses meanings of a ‘structure in movement,’ that is, of ‘a structure endowed with the will to become another structure.’”[136] This is not a lack that renders the screenplay an intermediary form, but is instead its distinctive function.[137] The notion that the screenplay is marked by a “coarseness and incompleteness” only speaks to the inadequacy of literary and film criticism to deal with “the sign of another linguistic system”—a dynamic structure that transcends the concrete materials (words or filmic frames) assessed by “stylistic criticism.”[138] As Pasolini writes:

“one can’t ‘perceive’ this ‘desire for form’ from a detail of the form. This desire must be ideologically presupposed; it must be part of the critical code.”

Beyond this analysis of Pasolini’s take on the ontology of the screenplay, which would render any screenplay a viable object of study, the particular work examined in this article is useful for the manner in which it opens up responses to broader critiques of the screenplay as an art work. In particular, “Apocalypse Now” (1969) invites us to reconsider the assumed dichotomy between screenplays and filmic works that characterizes the former as one of many such texts within the production process and the latter as the definitive text that appears at the end of the process; a process by which “the film scenario is entirely ‘burnt up,’”[140] having served its purpose as merely a “blueprint,” or another ingredient, for the finished film that deserves our sole critical attention—a position attributed to Carroll.[141]

Throughout this article I have referred to “Apocalypse Now” (1969) when referring to the first draft screenplay, but have also made reference to Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now* and Milius’ *Apocalypse Now*. The undated italicized title—*Apocalypse Now*—is intended to refer to the concept of the artwork, or “the art-idea.” Such a concept partially aligns with what Ian W. MacDonald calls “the screen idea,” though not with much precision, and drawing a comparison between these two notions is useful for drawing out their nuances. While both function as “a central imaginary which can be viewed from different perspectives, like a crystal with different facets,” MacDonald’s screen idea relates to a “singular project that people are working on”—specifically one intended to produce a “screenwork”—rather than the broader, conceptual, art-idea I am referring to, with which a wider range of persons within an open-ended timeline may participate to produce a variety of media.[142] This is to say an art-idea can be manifested in myriad forms—whether screenplay, film, novelization (text or graphic), game (video, board, card etc.), or theme park ride, for that matter—and across several decades. The art-idea of *Star Wars: A New Hope*, for instance, has taken all such forms, while a videogame and associated novels were recently conceived for *Apocalypse Now*. [143] Further, as MacDonald writes, the screen idea

“is a term which names what is being striven for, even while that goal cannot be seen or shared exactly. The goal of the concrete never arrives—as the screenwork develops, each draft script becomes one more fixed version of the screen idea. The final film—the screenwork—is another such version.”[144]

While both the art-idea and the screen idea relate to a productive virtuality that can never be exhausted in its manifestations, the passage indicates that MacDonald nevertheless positions the cinematographic “screenwork”—or “final film”—as the end of a given project, given it is its development that underpins the entire process (“as the screenwork develops...”). This is where we depart. The reason I have come to refer to the art-idea of *Apocalypse Now* throughout this article is because of the large number of variant versions of the film that exist, as listed at the beginning of this article. This raised the question as to which filmed version should be privileged when referring to Coppola’s take on *Apocalypse Now*, and why any one of those takes ought to be privileged over Milius’ take on the art-idea of *Apocalypse Now*.

The question of privilege with respect to the manifestation of this art-idea relates to another: is the notion of a definitive “final film” outdated? While the four officially released versions of *Apocalypse Now* are perhaps an extreme example, it is closely followed by the three versions of Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner*, and it is the critical and commercial success of the “director’s cut” of the latter, released a decade after the 1982 version, that opened up a space by which the notion of the filmic work as authoritative and concrete has come to be destabilized. Variations of the filmic work within this space most commonly take the form of the following:

- “director’s” cuts, typically restoring / presenting, for the first time, all of the content the film’s director wished to feature when creating the film, within their intended design (sequencing, soundtrack, etc.);
- “extended” cuts, typically home media versions that feature more content in order to attract repeat viewers;
- “unrated” cuts, home media versions featuring explicit content that was cut from the theatrical versions in order to avoid negative commercial impact from restrictive age certifications;
- “remasters” by which black and white films come to be colorized, color films are color corrected—sometimes in a manner markedly different to the original, as with the Wachowskis’ *The Matrix* (1999) whose green hue was further intensified for its 2008 Blu-Ray release—or images are manipulated / corrected with the use of Computer Generated Imagery, as with George Lucas’ updating of the original *Star Wars* trilogy;
- alternate versions of films by which the original colour images are rendered in black and white, as with *Mad Max: Fury Road* (George Miller 2015) and *Logan* (James Mangold 2017), and given limited theatrical runs and home media releases; and
- the re-soundtracking of films, which includes the dubbing of films with release-region appropriate voice-actors, silent-era films given contemporary musical backing (e.g. Giorgio Moroder’s 1984 restoration of Fritz Lang’s 1927 silent feature *Metropolis*) and contemporary films being screened with new music inspired by the original movie (e.g. a re-scored version of Nicolas Winding-Refn’s *Drive* [2011] made exclusively for airing on the television channel BBC Three in 2014).[145]

Clearly, cinematographic takes on an art-idea can be as processual as a screenplay with respect to its various manifestations, with no time limit to such re-drafting, given that some works are revised decades after their original release, producing yet another manifestation.[146] And the opportunity to produce a screenplay is similarly open-ended, given the existence of screenplays that have been produced and published after a film’s completion. I am referring here to the retroactive screenplay, such as those produced by Coppola and Milius for *Apocalypse Now: Redux* (2001) or Colin McCabe’s reconstruction of Donald Cammell’s lost screenplay for *Performance* (1970), both published in 2001. Given these are written after the completion of the specific version of the audio-visual product they intend to communicate, there is no definitive reason why such screenplays couldn’t be revised further, to enhance the action/direction prose for instance, and be re-published once again. Ted Nannicelli’s view on such retroactive screenplays, in agreement with Carroll, is that they are merely transcriptions which “like a video recording of a performance, is just a record of an artwork on which it depends for its existence and is not an artwork in its own right.”[147]

However, I believe that such screenplays align with Pasolini’s conception of the screenplay-text so long as they function to project mental images within the readers’ minds via this particular form of writing, and that, beyond mere transcription, there is room for creative license in the retroactive screenplay akin to that of the literary genre of movie novelizations, a form of text that attained popularity in the nineteen-seventies and which similarly served as a “record or memento of these milestones of cinema at a time when audio-visual records were not yet easily available” due to the lack, or the expense, of home media appliances.[148]

Given the equivalence in status between both the screenplay and the filmic work within a continual process related to a shared and multiplicitous art-idea, we can consider each such manifestation to

be a valid object of study regardless of where they appear within that lineage of works.

With respect to this article, I opened with a few comparisons between the filmed versions of *Apocalypse Now* and its first draft screenplay in order to orient the reader towards the distinctiveness of the latter and my hope is that readers recognize that Milius' screenplay is a fascinating work of art regardless of the various cinematographic manifestations of *Apocalypse Now* steered by Coppola. The analysis of "Apocalypse Now" (1969) given in this essay demonstrates how a screenplay can produce its own original themes and subtexts, which are worthy of study in their own right and provide valuable insight into the subject matter addressed, regardless of the audio-visual works—or any other kind—that are produced in relation to them.

## Notes

1. Lewis, Jon. *Whom God Wishes to Destroy... Francis Coppola and the New Hollywood*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995: 13. [[return to top](#)]
2. Figueroa, Joey and Zak Knutson, *Milius*. Chop Shop Entertainment and Haven Entertainment, 2013.
3. Along with the live, on-set improvisation, that occurred—as captured in the documentary film *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse* (Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper and Eleanor Coppola 1991)—Francis Ford Coppola's approach to improvisation also encompassed workshoping new ideas with actors, which "provided the basis of many of the scenes I would write out late at night." Coppola, Francis Ford. "Introduction," in John Milius and Francis Ford Coppola. *Apocalypse Now Redux*. London: Faber and Faber, 2001: viii. This approach was pioneered by independent filmmaker John Cassavetes, who encouraged improvisation during his films' rehearsals "so that the actors had considerable input and helped to shape not only the actual script but the final film." Murphy, J.J. *Rewriting Indie Cinema: Improvisation, Psychodrama, and the Screenplay*. New York: Columbia University Press: 48.
4. Additionally, Peter Cowie points out that, upon his decision to direct the film in 1975, Coppola asked Milius to revise the screenplay and bring it closer to its source material of Conrad's novella. Revisions to the screenplay resulted in a further nine drafts that year, with the last dated 29 June 1976, three months after shooting had already commenced. Cowie, Peter. *The Apocalypse Now Book*. London and New York: Faber and Faber, 2000: 7 and 43. That the filmed set-piece sequences described earlier largely align with Milius' 1969 draft further speaks to the way that the changes, first through attempted redrafts and then on-set improvisation and extensive post-production work, specifically relate to a rethinking of the overarching narrative structure and themes of the story.
5. Milius, John. "A Soldier's Tale," in *Rolling Stone: The Seventies*, eds. Ashley Khan, Holly George-Warren and Shawn Dahl. Great Britain: Simon & Schuster, 1998: 273.
6. Milius, John. "Apocalypse Now." First draft 12/5/1969. San Francisco: American Zoetrope, 1969: 41. Quotations given in italics relate to scene descriptions and direction from the screenplay, while quotations that do not feature italics communicate dialogue from the screenplay. No italics feature in the original screenplay but such formatting has been employed here to help the reader to differentiate between quoted descriptions/direction and quoted dialogue.
7. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 42.
8. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 42 and 43.
9. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 43.
10. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 26 and 48.
11. Milius, "A Soldier's Tale": 273.
12. Pure Frustration Productions, "Between the Lines," 2008. Accessed 06/20/20 <http://www.betweenthelinesfilm.com/>
13. Ponder, Ty and Scott Bass. *Between the Lines: Surfers During the Vietnam War*. Pure Frustration Productions, 2008.
14. Ponder and Bass, *Between the Lines*, and Jake Newby. "Pensacola documentary 'Back to China Beach' chronicles Vietnam War surfing club," *Pensacola News Journal*, Dec 11 2019. Accessed 06/26/20 <https://eu.pnj.com/story/news/local/2019/10/11/pensacola-documentary-back-china-beach-chronicles-vietnam-war-surfing-club/3928878002/>
15. Newby, "Pensacola."
16. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 6.
17. Ponder and Bass, *Between the Lines*.
18. Ponder and Bass, *Between the Lines*.
19. Ponder and Bass, *Between the Lines*.
20. Ponder and Bass, *Between the Lines*. At a screening of *Between the Lines* at the Alma Surf Festival, in Sao Paulo, Brasil, co-director Ty Ponder recounted another such story—an American soldier who caught "a glimpse of the Viet Cong with his AK-47s while he waited for the waves on a deserted beach, but who went through the experience unscathed." Ricardo Calil, "Surf in the Apocalypse," *Trip* #170, February 2 2009. Accessed 06/27/20. <https://revistatrip.uol.com.br/trip/surf-no-apocalipse>
21. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 16. [[return to page 2](#)]
22. Cowie, *The Apocalypse*: 42-43.

23. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 99.
24. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 100.
25. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 101.
26. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 43.
27. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 62-4.
28. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 93.
29. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 130.
30. Paglia, Camille. "Cults and Cosmic Consciousness: Religious Vision in the American 1960s," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics*. Third Series, Vol. 10, No. 3, Winter, 2003: 86.
31. Norris, Margot. "Modernism and Vietnam: Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*," *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3, Fall, 1998: 730.
32. Norris, "Modernism": 730.
33. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 1.
34. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 3-4.
35. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 4.
36. In their 2018 survey of a nationally representative sample of Americans, Ronald R. Krebs and Robert Ralston found that "roughly half" of the 2,451 respondents still believe "service members join the military primarily out of intrinsic motivations: because they are sincere patriots who love their country or because they are good citizens who see it as their duty to serve," despite the expectation of military sociologists and historians that "*the mythic tradition of the citizen-soldier*" would be destroyed within "the mind of the U.S. public" once the U.S. "abandoned the draft and replaced conscripts with paid professionals," rendering military service "just a 'job'." Krebs Ronald R. and Robert Ralston. "Patriotism or Paychecks: Who Believes What About Why Soldiers Serve," *Armed Forces & Society*. April 2020: 2. For his part, Milius claims that among his friendship group "I was the only one who wanted to enlist" to fight in Vietnam, though his asthma meant he "washed out," and his admiration for the figure of the U.S. soldier is evident throughout his Rolling Stone article. Milius, "A Soldier's Tale": 272.
37. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 49.
38. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 116
39. Paglia, "Cults": 90.
40. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 110.
41. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 110 and 113.
42. Lachman, Gary Valentine. *Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius*. Basingstoke and Oxford: Sidgwick & Jackson, 2001: 6.
43. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 90.
44. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 107.
45. Booth, Douglas. "Surfing Films and Videos: Adolescent Fun, Alternative Lifestyle, Adventure Industry," *Journal of Sport History*, Fall, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1996: 320.
46. Prodanovich, Todd. "60 Years of Getting Weird," *Surfer*. Spring 2020. Reprinted online. Accessed 07/31/20 <https://www.surfer.com/features/surfer-magazine-60-year-anniversary-reenvisioning-classic-surfer-covers/>
47. Laderman, Scott. "A World Apart: Pleasure, Rebellion, and the Politics of Surf Tourism," in *The Critical Surf Studies Reader*, eds. Dexter Zavalza Hough-Snee and Alexander Sotelo Eastman. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017: 49.
48. Laderman, "A World Apart": 59.
49. Surfer Intern. "John Milius: A Brief QnA with the Narrator of "Between The Lines," *Surfer*. July 22 2010. Accessed 06/27/20 <https://www.surfer.com/features/milius-qna-btl/>
50. Booth, "Surfing Films": 320. [[return to page 3](#)]
51. Surfer Intern, "John Milius."
52. Milius, John. *Big Wednesday*. A-Team Productions, 1978.
53. Milius, *Big Wednesday*.
54. Milius, *Big Wednesday*.
55. Milius, *Big Wednesday*.
56. Milius, *Big Wednesday*.
57. Warren, Andrew and Chris Gibson. "Soulful and Precarious: The Working Experiences of Surfboard Makers," in *The Critical Surf Studies Reader*, eds. Dexter Zavalza Hough-Snee and Alexander Sotelo Eastman. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017: 342-3.

58. Milius, *Big Wednesday*.
59. Hough-Snee, Dexter Zavalza and Alexander Sotelo Eastman. "Consolidation, Creativity, and (de)Colonization in the State of Modern Surfing," in *The Critical Surf Studies Reader*, eds. Dexter Zavalza Hough-Snee and Alexander Sotelo Eastman. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017: 84-108.
60. Milius, *Big Wednesday*.
61. Paglia, "Cults": 81.
62. Milius, *Big Wednesday*.
63. Figueroa and Knutson, *Milius*.
64. Segaloff, Nat. "John Milius: The Good Fights," in *Backstory 4: Interviews with Screenwriters of the 1970s and 1980s*, ed. Patrick McGilligan. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2006: 276.
65. Leotta, Alfio. "I love the smell of napalm in the morning': violence and nostalgia in the cinema of John Milius," *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, No. 57, Fall 2016. <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc57.2016/-LeottaMillius/index.html>
66. Laderman, "A World Apart": 48-9.
67. Laderman, "A World Apart": 49.
68. Couldwell, Andrew. "Surf Nazis," *Club of the Waves*, June 2 2019. Accessed 12/21/20 <https://clubofthewaves.com/feature/surf-nazis/>; Duane, Daniel. "The Long, Strange Tale of California's Surf Nazis," *The New York Times*. Sept 28 2019. Accessed 04/12/20 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/sunday/surf-racism.html>
69. Milius, "A Soldier's Tale": 273
70. "Charlie doesn't surf" in the original script. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 30.
71. Patterson, Thom. "'Apocalypse' writer: Most scripts today 'are garbage'," *CNN*. 9th March 2009. Accessed 08/03/20 <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/Movies/03/09/john.milius.movies/index.html>
72. The Vietnamese dialogue fits with Coppola's characterization of the conclusion to the screenplay: "a comic-strip resolution. Attila the Hun [i.e., Kurtz] with two bands of machine-gun bullets around him, taking the hero [Willard] by the hand, saying, 'Yes, yes, here! I have the power in my loins!' Willard converts to Kurtz's side; in the end, he's firing up at the helicopters that are coming to get him, crying out crazily. A movie comic." Marcus, Greil. "Journey Up the River: An Interview with Francis Coppola," *Rolling Stone*, November 1 1979. Reprinted online. Accessed 07/11/20 <https://greilmarcus.net/2014/07/04/journey-up-the-river-an-interview-with-francis-coppola-1979/>
73. Leotta, "I love'."
74. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": n.p.
75. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": n.p.
76. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": n.p.
77. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": n.p.
78. As Martin Scorsese recalls in Figueroa and Knutson, *Milius*: "I heard that he referred to himself as a Zen Anarchist." The phrase appears throughout many print and online texts regarding Milius (e.g. Leotta, "I love'"), though the original source is never credited. In any case, it's a widely known attribution that at the very least is part of the public persona that Segaloff and others suggest Milius actively encourages.
79. Surfer Intern, "John Milius."
80. Maysles, David, Albert Maysles, and Charlotte Zwerin. *Gimme Shelter*. Maysles Films Inc., 1970. [\[return to page 4\]](#)
81. McMillian, John. *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011: 1
82. Rubin, Martin. "'Make Love Make War': Cultural Confusion and the Biker Film Cycle," *Film History*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Exploitation Film (Autumn) 1994: 355-6.
83. Poole, Buzz. "What happened to Rock and Roll After Altamont?" *Literary Hub*, December 6 2019. Accessed 07/24/20 <https://lithub.com/what-happened-to-rock-and-roll-after-altamont/>
84. Paglia, "Cults": 62.
85. Paglia, "Cults": 91.
86. See, for instance, The Rolling Stones' psychedelic long-player, *Their Satanic Majesties Request* (1967), and songs such as *Sympathy for the Devil* (1968). The band's sources of occultism were two filmmakers—Kenneth Anger, for whom Mick Jagger, the lead singer of the Stones, wrote a soundtrack (*Invocation of my Demon Brother* [1969]), and Donald Cammell, in whose directorial debut Jagger starred (*Performance*, co-directed by Nicolas Roeg, filmed in 1968 and released in 1970).
87. Lachman, *Turn Off*: xvii and 5.

88. It's worth pointing out that while the mainstream press, once it had actually caught up with what had really occurred that day, would come to repeat the "death of the sixties" motif in regard to Altamont, the underground press, written by and for participants of the counterculture—"many New Leftists never bothered to read daily newspapers, at least not when they wanted to know what was going on in their own milieu"—responded in much the same way. McMillian, *Smoking*: 3-4. McMillian cites a lead article in the *Berkeley Tribe*, written in the immediate aftermath of the event, that he believes encapsulates "the trope [that] arose in the underground press" in response to what had happened: "Altamont . . . exploded the myth of innocence for a section of America. [...] Our one-day micro society was bound to the death-throes of capitalist greed. [...] Clearly, nobody is in control. Not the Angels, not the people. Not Richard Nixon, or his pigs. Nobody." McMillian, *Smoking*: 2.
89. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 118.
90. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 123.
91. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 126.
92. Paglia, "Cults": 63.
93. Francis Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*. Omni Zoetrope, 1979.
94. Hellmann, John. "Apocalypse Now Redux and the Curse of Vietnam," in *The United States and the Legacy of the Vietnam War*, ed. Jon Roper. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: 67-8
95. MSNBC. "NBC News Report on the Manson Family's Arrest," 1969. Archive footage posted by *True Crime Magazine* on YouTube, August 14 2017. Accessed 07/25/20 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8IQB4OcUrc>
96. Bugliosi, Vincent and Curt Gentry. *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders*. London: Arrow Books, 1974; 2015 edition: 45.
97. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 107.
98. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 108-9.
99. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 112.
100. Vincent, Alice. "A Beach Boy's deal with the devil: when Dennis Wilson met Charles Manson," *The Telegraph*. Nov 20 2017. Accessed 10/08/20 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/artists/beach-boys-deal-devil-dennis-wilson-met-charles-manson/>
101. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 115 and 119.
102. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 111.
103. Bugliosi and Gentry, *Helter Skelter*: 319.
104. Bugliosi and Gentry, *Helter Skelter*: 320.
105. Bugliosi and Gentry, *Helter Skelter*: 320.
106. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 108.
107. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 114.
108. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 114.
109. George-Warren, Holly. "Preface," in *Rolling Stone: The Seventies*, eds. Ashley Khan, Holly George-Warren and Shawn Dahl. Great Britain: Simon & Schuster, 1998: 3.
110. See, especially, Part II of Melnick, Jeffrey. *Creepy Crawling: Charles Manson and the Many Lives of America's Most Infamous Family*. New York: Arcade Publishing, 2018.
111. Albright, Brian. *Wild Beyond Belief! Interviews with Exploitation Filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, 2008: 65.
112. Ponder and Bass, *Between the Lines*.
113. McMillian, *Smoking*: 173.
114. Hellmann. "Apocalypse": 68.
115. Paglia, "Cults": 64.
116. Spann, Michael. "Acid Fascism," in *Death Cults: Murder, Mayhem and Mind Control*, ed. Jack Sargeant. London: Virgin Books, 2002: 87-96.
117. Bugliosi and Gentry, *Helter Skelter*: 57.
118. Bugliosi and Gentry, *Helter Skelter*: 89.
119. Paglia, "Cults": 65.
120. Stone, Robert. *Prime Green: Remembering the Sixties*. New York : HarperCollins e-books, 2007: 202.
121. Milius, "Apocalypse Now": 114.
122. Milius, "A Soldier's Tale": 273.

123. As Michael Richardson writes, Coppola's filmed version of *Apocalypse Now* "succeeds in being the Vietnam War film, while in a real sense not being about Vietnam at all," which is to say that "*Apocalypse Now* is a film about the United States written, like a palimpsest, across the landscape of Vietnam." Richardson, Michael. *Otherness in Hollywood Cinema*. New York and London: Continuum, 2010: 138-9. [[return to page 5](#)]

124. See Arellano, Jerónimo. "The Screenplay in the Archive: Screenwriting, New Cinemas, and the Latin American Boom," *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, Año 69, No. 2 (December 2016): 114, for a brief overview on the relatively recent emergence of screenplay scholarship across the past two decades.

125. Korte, Barbara and Ralf Schneider. "The Published Screenplay—A New 'Literary' Genre?," *AAA: Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik*. Vol. 25, No 1. (2000): 96 and 89.

126. Arellano, "The Screenplay": 116.

127. This text is translated by Louise K. Barnett and Ben Lawton and was originally published in 1965. Citations here lack reference to pagination due to its being accessed via online research repository ProQuest. Pasolini, Pier Paolo. "THE SCREENPLAY AS A 'STRUCTURE THAT WANTS TO BE ANOTHER STRUCTURE'". *The American Journal of Semiotics*; Kent Vol. 4, Iss. 1/2, (1986): 53-72. ProQuest. Accessed 09/15/21 <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/screenplay-as-structure-that-wants-be-another/docview/213747053/se-2?accountid=14987>

128. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

129. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

130. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

131. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

132. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

133. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

134. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

135. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

136. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

137. Pasolini does not explicitly state whether what applies to the screenplay-text applies to theatrical/play-texts but, given the rootedness of the latter in the literary tradition, one could reasonably assume that theatrical scripts privilege the grapheme and the phoneme in the written-spoken language system, rather than partaking in the coordination of the kineme such that it produces an im-sign that connects the screenplay to the cinematic. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

138. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

139. Pasolini, "THE SCREENPLAY."

140. Korte and Schneider, "The Published Screenplay": 90

141. See Ted Nannicelli, "Why Can't Screenplays Be Artworks?," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (FALL 2011), pp. 405-414

142. MacDonald, Ian W. *Screenwriting Poetics and the Screen Idea*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013): 4

143. Erebus LLC. "Apocalypse Now - like Fallout: New Vegas on acid in Vietnam (Canceled)," *Kickstarter*. Accessed 10/10/21 <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/fringerider/apocalypse-now-the-game/?ref=kicktraq>

144. MacDonald. *Screenwriting Poetics*: 6 and 4.

145. The examples given here encompass officially authorized variations on released movies, and exclude the unofficial re-edits or remixes created, for instance, by the Fan Edit community (<https://ifdb.fanedit.org/>), or leaked (unofficially released) workprints of films.

146. There are some filmmakers who state the theatrical version of their films are the "final," or only, cuts. However, the example of the three versions of *New York, New York* (1977) by Martin Scorsese, who has repeatedly expressed such a position, shows that the release of a variation is not always their own decision but that of the studio, producer, or rights holder.

147. Nannicelli, "Why Can't Screenplays": 409.

148. Korte and Schneider, "The Published Screenplay": 91.

