

# Violent Heat

## Apocalypse Now between (De-)Colonization and the Cold War

JOURNAL DOI <https://doi.org/10.31944>  
ISSUE DOI <https://doi.org/10.31944/20229502>  
ARTICLE DOI <https://doi.org/10.31944/2022950202>

---

**Christa Wirth**

University of Agder,  
Kristiansand, Norway

### Abstract

In this article, I try to illuminate how decolonization and the Cold War intersect in the cases of film (making) and literature. In particular, I study heat as a metaphor and what it reveals about the nexus of decolonization and the Cold War. To this end, I scrutinize three “sites”: the film and film set of *Apocalypse Now* and the novel *The Sympathizer* which critically dissects both. The third “site” is *Heart of Darkness* which served as the basis for the script of *Apocalypse Now*.

I suggest, *Apocalypse Now* echoes a colonial medical history of “tropical neurasthenia,” relevant as a concept during the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), among other places. “Tropical neurasthenia” in the Philippines entailed the fear of the U.S. military that its soldiers would demise physically and mentally in the heat of Southeast Asia.

However, *Apocalypse Now* does not merely reproduce the discourse of “tropical neurasthenia”. Instead, the heat in the film brings to light the physical and moral decay of U.S. soldiers as the result of a violent U.S. empire. It is thus a tropicity which recognizes the colonized people’s gaze of the violent colonizer.

### Keywords

*Apocalypse Now*, *Heart of Darkness*, *The Sympathizer*, the Philippines, tropicity, tropical neurasthenia, decolonization, Cold War

In 1964 Richard Nixon, who had lost the U.S. presidential race against John F. Kennedy four years earlier, criticized the Democratic administration for its alleged passivity, saying, “The Cold War isn’t thawing; it is burning with a deadly heat” (Nixon 299). With this temperature-infused rhetoric, he not only cast doubt on the supposed “thawing” of frozen diplomatic relations between East and West, but also questioned the “cold” stalemate between the two power blocs and fueled the conflict with his language. The extent to which Nixon backed up his words with action has since come to light: in 1968, as a presidential candidate, he sabotaged the pacification efforts of incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) in Vietnam (Farell). LBJ, for his part, had contributed massively to the military conflict in Southeast Asia: in 1964 and 1965, he ordered air strikes against North Vietnam and sent U.S. ground troops to South Vietnam, lest Vietnam, like a falling domino, tip other countries in Asia into the “communist abyss” along with it (Lawrence).

This conflict in Southeast Asia is called the “Vietnam War” in the U.S. and the “American War” in Vietnam. In recent historiography it is named the “Second Indochina War,” to distinguish it from earlier and later conflicts and to make clear that the conflict area included Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia (Lawrence 1).<sup>2</sup> The “Second Indochina War” represented one of the many theaters in the so-called Third World<sup>3</sup> where the logic of the Cold War perpetuated pre-existing (decolonization) conflicts as “hot” wars. While the East-West conflict was perceived as a cold stalemate in the North, the aggression pent up under the frozen surface was discharged—as perceived—in these “hot” wars in the South. The structure of the systemic conflict allowed Europe to experience a period of peace while the Third World was beset by violence (McMahon 6-7; Westad; Greiner et al.). Between 1945 and 1990, approximately 200,000 people died in conflicts in the Global North compared to 19,800,000 people in the Global South (Painter 525). However, a simple causal relationship between the Cold War and hot wars in the Global South cannot be assumed. In addition to the bipolar logic of the Cold War, processes of decolonization and accompanying nationalist projects, local and regional conflicts, and rival population groups, who in turn used the logic of the systemic conflict to internationalize their disputes, were

decisive factors in these wars. The analytical simplification of the Moscow- and Washington-driven “proxy wars” in the Third World does not do justice to the complexity of the historical phenomena (McMahon 6-8).

With this article, I join the scholarly endeavor of thinking about the Cold War and (de)colonization together to understand conflicts in their global dimension. I specifically analyze what heat as a metaphor reveals about the intersection of decolonization and the Cold War. I will subject three interwoven “sites”—in the broadest sense—to a *close reading*: the film *Apocalypse Now* (directed by Francis Ford Coppola), the set in the Philippines where it was filmed, and the literary treatment of both the film and the events that took place on the film set in Viet Thanh Nguyen’s novel *The Sympathizer*. This article will come full circle when I integrate a discussion of Joseph Conrad, whose *Heart of Darkness* was the basis for the script of *Apocalypse Now*. The film *Apocalypse Now* lends itself to such a study because in it the phenomena of decolonization, the Cold War, nationalism, and the First and Third Worlds collide and interlock. In the film, heat is key to several central scenes. Thus, in addition to analyzing the metaphor of heat, I examine the sections of the film in which heat functions as an important character.

The following questions guide me in my analysis: How is the metaphor of heat mobilized in its linguistic, physiological, emotional, geographical, and climatological manifestations in the various locations? How are the different expressions of heat related? What historical contexts are brought into play when heat appears as a character? How can the Cold War, colonization, and decolonization be interpreted in terms of heat?

Although the “Vietnam War” in U.S. culture and society has been an object of study (for example, Milam), as has the “American War” in Vietnam (see, for example, Guan), the analysis of heat in the “Vietnam War” from a cultural-historical perspective represents a gap in the existing research. Anthropologist Michael Taussig laments the absence of heat in stories and films and analyzes heat in the reportage on the “Vietnam War” written by journalist Michael Herr, which the latter published in 1967. In this reportage, heat stands for sensory overload and violence (Taussig 32).

In the present text, heat also represents violence, but the metaphor extends far beyond this. I argue how heat in the film *Apocalypse Now* represents violence stemming from an imperial Cold War conflict fought out in the Southeast Asian jungle. The film echoes the colonial Western concept of tropicality, whereby the tropical landscape and the people in it are imagined as indolent and extreme in opposition to the temperate Westerners in their temperate environments, as David Arnold has argued (1996, 2000, 2005). Tropicality and the “tropics” that emerged 500 years ago but solidified in the 1700 hundreds as a Western fantasy was “a pathological space of degeneration” (Driver and Martins 3, Arnold, *The Problem of Nature* 143). What travel literature, art, and science had been to the making of tropicality envisioned through landscapes in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Driver and Martins 3-20), were literature, film, and photography in the case of the Vietnam War, and especially *Apocalypse Now* (Bowd and Clayton 637). *Apocalypse Now*, I claim, echoes tropicality, specifically an older colonial medical history of “tropical neurasthenia” which was apparent during the Philippine-American War (1899-1902) and afterwards. The discourse of “tropical neurasthenia” by which the U.S. military feared succumbing physically and mentally to the moist heat remained prevalent until the 1920s (W. Anderson 7, 77, 145). After U.S. scientists in the Philippines debunked the idea of environmental determinism in the tropics, they laid the groundwork for modern microbiological causes of illness that are intrinsic to bodies and behavior (W. Anderson 76, 82, 87, 103).

*Apocalypse Now* continues the discourse of tropicality within the context of colonizing “proxy wars” during the Cold War, by showing how U.S. soldiers descended into madness within the heat of the jungle, as I will show. I also claim, however, that tropicality illuminated through the prism of heat in the film complicates its concept because tropical heat exposes the physical and moral decay of the U.S. men as the result of a violent U.S. empire. It is thus a tropicality which recognizes the colonized people’s gaze of the violent colonizer. Heat, consequently, exposes Western tropicality as a projection of its own violent demise onto the colonized environment.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, I argue that there is a subversive element to the implementation of heat in

*Apocalypse Now*, which was not the case with early 20<sup>th</sup> century neurasthenia which lacked the notion of U.S. self-critique (W. Anderson 134). The imperial Cold Warrior in *Apocalypse Now* is no longer “unmarked and unseen” (Rafael 200) by Southeast Asian people. Instead, he (sic) has internalized their gaze.

That a mental impact remained (or surfaced) after the U.S. soldiers’ return home manifests itself in the shift in medicine towards Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). The diagnosis PTSD is tightly linked to the Vietnam War (Golterman 197-212; Jones and Wessely 130-131; Crocq and Crocq 53). The experience of heat in the jungle and the concomitant mental and physical demise of Western white men thus could not be resolved by removing them from the tropical environment and returning them back home to the U.S. because this was the experience that was intrinsic to the U.S. empire<sup>5</sup>—as I argue from a cultural analytical perception. The Philippines and other cases show how tropicality remained a historical constant well beyond the 1920s and parallel to the development of current “modern” Western medicine (W. Anderson 76, 87; Weinstein and Ravi 2009).

### ***Apocalypse Now: The Self-Centered and Self-Critical Trauma***

The film *Apocalypse Now* has been instrumental in shaping the image of the “Vietnam War” among the U.S. public. Directed by Francis Ford Coppola and with a budget of approximately \$31.5 million (Chong 154), the film hit theaters in 1979, at a time when the war had been considered officially over by the U.S. for four years, but combat operations continued in Southeast Asia. The lavishly produced war drama, shot in the Philippines between 1976 and 1979, became a major commercial success in the United States (Gonzalez 144). In 2001, Francis Ford Coppola released an extended version called *Apocalypse Now Redux*, which is the basis for the analysis in this text.<sup>6</sup> The plot revolves around U.S. Army Captain Benjamin L. Willard, played by Martin Sheen, who is sent by his superiors on a secret mission to kill Colonel Walter E. Kurtz, portrayed by Marlon Brando, who is considered insane. Kurtz operates in Cambodia with his own army and independently of the U.S. military. The action of the film is meant to take place in 1969.<sup>7</sup>

Heat played a central role in the film's narrative, as well as on the film set itself. Right at the beginning of the film, it lures the viewer to the action: the camera's gaze turns to the edge of a rainforest. The sound of beating helicopter rotors announces the impending attack. Within seconds, the forest is engulfed in a napalm inferno. Jim Morrison of *The Doors* sings in a rapt but haunting voice that "this is the end". This single sequence of images immediately legitimizes the film's title: *Apocalypse Now*. The biblical quotation refers to the moral dimension of the "Vietnam War," which led to the end of humanness and thus of humankind. At the same time, the contemporary, nuclear interpretation of the apocalypse resonates in the film. In particular, the moral high ground—self-perceived and perceived abroad—of one of the countries that had defeated National Socialism burned in the heat of the fire: the United States now found itself in a war of a different kind than World War II. The focus on the Cold War in Washington, DC, as well as in Moscow<sup>8</sup> and Beijing,<sup>9</sup> obscured the fact that broad sections of the population in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were waging a nationalist, anti-colonial war of liberation, and thus their decolonization efforts vis-à-vis France, now directed against the United States, were appearing in a new incarnation (Lawrence 28).

In the opening scene of the film, images of the jungle on fire merge with shots of Willard lying on the bed of a hotel room, staring at the ceiling. There, fan blades mingle with helicopter rotors. In turn, flames appear on Willard's sweating face. While he smokes a cigarette, the viewer follows the camera deeper into the scorching heat of the inflamed rainforest. This superimposition of images insinuates an intermingling of Willard's memory of and fantasy about a real, hot conflict inscribed in his sweating body that is also being played out in his mind. Scantly clad, Willard at times stares into space and is enraptured, at times flailing and crying, at times motionless. Is he awake? Is he asleep? Is he conscious? This combines "real" scenes in the hotel with images of the jungle and fire, which emerge from the unconscious and reveal the abyss therein<sup>10</sup>. For Francis Ford Coppola, the psychoanalytical approach to the story was central: "Willard's journey up the river is also a journey into himself [...]" (qtd. in Cowie 35). One of the images of the jungle

shows Willard, daubed with camouflage paint and with a distorted look in his eyes, rising to commit the murder of Kurtz—which only becomes visible at the end of the film. The heat, the jungle, and the savage Willard can be seen as representations of Willard’s unconscious and highlight his primitive side. The violence of the U.S. soldiers, long hidden from the U.S. public and only addressed later on in the course of the “Vietnam War,” becomes visible here. Willard’s loss of control in the hot hotel room makes it clear that he is no longer “master in his own house” (Sigmund Freud: “Herr im eigenen Haus”), nor master of the situation. The U.S. had reached its limits in creating a liberal-democratic world order in the binary system conflict between liberal capitalist democracy and communism of the Cold War. The self-confidence of the U.S. soldiers of the “Greatest Generation” of World War II gives way to the insight the “Vietnam War Generation” gained over its own abysses and limitations.

This is also accompanied by the end of the fantasy of omnipotence and naiveté in the self-image of the young superpower. The reasons for the U.S. defeat are manifold and will not be discussed in detail here. It is obvious, however, that despite its technological superiority, the U.S. failed, among other things, because of the perseverance and military effort of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), operating out of Hanoi, and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam (FNL),<sup>11</sup> which used guerrilla methods in the south against the South Vietnamese government (Republic of Vietnam, or RVN) in Saigon and its U.S. allies. Ultimately, the U.S. also crumbled under pressure from the communist Vietnamese population, whose will to resist the U.S. was steadfast and omnipresent. Furthermore, the difficult conditions in the rainforest, and not least the heat, posed great challenges to the U.S. soldiers (Lawrence 107).

In the song *The End*, which plays during to the opening scenes of *Apocalypse Now*, Jim Morrison refers to Sigmund Freud’s theory of the Oedipus complex, which Freud describes as an elemental emotional phase in a boy’s childhood, and which encompasses rivalry with and fear of the father—and in the case of the United States, many of the fathers of the generation fighting in Vietnam had come home victorious from World War II.

Defeat in the “Vietnam War” threatened the masculinity of Willard’s generation, which had already been considered endangered since the 1950s. Experts warned against too much mother love (known as “momism”), which would prevent the development of a “healthy” masculinity in sons (Vicedo 236-237). Oedipus is also referenced in the film’s conclusion when Willard murders the father figure Kurtz. The pain of the sweating Willard, naked at the end of the hotel scene, meanwhile, is “chauvinistic” (Tomasulo 151) because the “Vietnam War” is portrayed in the film as a U.S. and not a Southeast Asian trauma (Chong 29). Yet, there is a subversive layer to this post-“colonial breakdown” (W. Anderson 134), as the U.S. in the character of Willard is depicted as violent in the isolation of his room while facing himself in the mirror: The violence of the U.S. empire is self-inflicted and self-reflected.

The anxieties about masculinity in the context of heat that are visible in *Apocalypse Now* also point to older scientific-medical discourses that were virulent in the Philippine-American War (1899-1902). U.S. military surgeons employed social Darwinist reasoning to explain the high rate of illness among their soldiers. According to them, the climate in the Philippine archipelago was intolerable to the “Anglo-Saxon” man (W. Anderson 24-25). The “white constitution” would “degenerate in the tropics” if no hygienic measures were taken. According to military-scientific discourse, which also reflected nineteenth-century European colonial literature, “loss of virility,” “neurasthenia,” “melancholy,” and “insanity” could result from prolonged residence in hot climates (W. Anderson 40-41). In the face of this heat, the colonization of the Philippines risked failing, as one U.S. military captain wrote: “The Anglo-Saxon branch of the Teutonic stock is severely handicapped by nature in the struggle to colonize the tropics [...]” (Munson 861). Nevertheless, the colonization mission was not fundamentally questioned (W. Anderson 134). Until the 1920s, the nervous breakdowns of white U.S. Americans in the Philippines were still considered a biological reaction to the humidity and heat and diagnosed with the term “tropical neurasthenia.” Only later did Sigmund Freud, and thus psychodynamic explanatory models, enter colonial health discourses in the Philippines, albeit selectively (W. Anderson Chapter 5).<sup>12</sup> However, psychoanalysis also fed off the racial-co-



lonial discourses of contemporary, European high imperialism. In *Totem und Taboo* (Westerink), Freud had developed the category of the “primitive” to name the early and repressed stages of mental development, thereby reproducing the social Darwinist anthropological model of the “evolutionarily backward primitive” (Brickman 4, 52). In *Apocalypse Now*, the traces of “tropical neurasthenia” and colonial-inspired psychoanalysis are visible: the (white) U.S. Americans are in danger of going insane and losing their masculinity because of the hot, tropical environment, while a relapse into the infantile/primitive seems inevitable given the presence of postcolonial subjects, as will be pointed out later in the text.

However, the cinematically realized screenplay, written by Francis Ford Coppola and John Milius, simultaneously contains a subversive, and self-reflective anti-colonial critique as mentioned, also because the story is based on *Heart of Darkness*, Joseph Conrad’s 1899 novella in which he denounces the brutality in King Leopold II’s “Congo Free State” (Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*).<sup>13</sup> Eleanor Coppola, who filmed her husband’s shooting with her own camera, accordingly called her documentary *Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker’s Apocalypse* (*Hearts of Darkness* 1991). The anti-colonial critique remains ambivalent in Francis Ford Coppola’s film, as it was in Conrad’s work. For although Conrad denounces the greed and violence of imperial Europe in Africa, his view of the continent remains colonial-racist in character (Simmons 20-21, 23-24). Francis Ford Coppola, for his part, understood himself to be making an anti-war film (Cowie 36) in which the Southeast Asian population waged an anti-colonial war of liberation first against France and then against the United States. In this way, Coppola interprets the “Vietnam War” as the “Second Indochina War” or as a continuation of Western imperial ambitions in the Global South (Dommann 20). At the same time, the film contains a colonial, asymmetrical view of Southeast Asian people because they are relegated to nameless, voiceless, and faceless extras (Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies* 65, 121).<sup>14</sup> Not least, the ambivalence of *Apocalypse Now* (Tomasulo) toward the independent Philippines is also evident in its asymmetrical co-production, or “exploitation cinema,” together with the Philippine film producer, Eddie Romero. “Exploitation

cinema” in the case of the Philippines refers to U.S. directors and producers having access to cheap Philippine production sites and labor, among other things (Barker and Imanjaya 234, 236, 238, 240).

This self-critical, anti-colonial/colonial ambivalence can be decoded using the motif of heat in *Apocalypse Now*: It represents, among other things, the imperial violence perpetrated (and experienced) by the United States and masculine vulnerability and fragility in the Cold War. This U.S. white male vulnerability would contribute to the establishing of diagnosis of PTSD by the early 1980s. At the same time, however, it also refers to older colonial discourses of the early 20th century about the “degeneration of white male bodies in the tropics.”<sup>15</sup> The gaze of the audiences exposed to *Apocalypse Now* and other Hollywood war films becomes that of the colonizer, colonized, and anti-colonial resistance. Hollywood war cinema, such as *Apocalypse Now*, colonizes and mainstreams the collective memories of the war in Southeast Asia while using the viewers’ gaze to render them complicit in the war crimes committed. Yet, as Jasmine Nadua Trice states, Filipino audiences can refer to Philippine references and depictions with laughter as a form of repudiation of this process (Solomon 25; Trice 992-993).

The heat in the film creates a “narrative effect” (Taussig 36-37) and is at the same time a subject with which the characters interact physically and mentally. The high temperature is also a constant companion for the soldiers. In the film, the heat merges with the elements of water, air, and earth, thereby reinforcing the impression of the heat’s omnipresence, as shown in the next sections.

The scenes that are discussed in the following take place on water. Here, the heat that can be measured climatologically, captured linguistically, and inscribed physiologically in the body embeds itself in the narrative. In the first example, Willard and his crew chug along on the Navy patrol boat to the mouth of the fictional Nung River, which he must go up to reach Kurtz. The officer steering the boat discusses with Willard the possible entry points into the river: “There’s about two points where we can draw enough water to get into the Nung River. They’re both hot; belong to Charlie” (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 21.45 min). The crew must therefore cross hot zones—i.e., dangerous

territory controlled by “Charlie,” as the U.S. forces disparagingly called the FNL. Willard doesn’t let this upset him; casually and with a cigarette hanging crookedly out of his mouth, he leans against the ship’s cabin and nonchalantly states: “Don’t worry about it.” That “coolness” is a misplaced emotional aggregate in these climes is suggested by Officer Phillips’s reply: “You know, I’ve pulled a few special ops in here. About six months ago, I took a man who was going past the bridge at Do Lung. He was regular army, too. I heard he shot himself in the head” (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 22.03 min). The dialogue echoes Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. In it, the protagonist Charlie Marlow, who works for a Belgian trading company, is informed by the ship’s captain during a trip upstream on the Congo that another European passenger had recently committed suicide (Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* 17). The heat here thus signals the threat of violence and the present conflict.

More heat-on-water sequences follow. In several scenes from *Apocalypse Now*, Willard sets himself apart from the group on the deck to read Kurtz’s file. As he does so, the camera zooms in close on the heavily sweating Willard, creating intimacy. In one of these scenes (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 22.29 min), beads of sweat cover his bare torso; even wiping his forehead brings little relief. This connotes the inhospitable environment while suggesting that studying the files makes Willard sweat. His thoughts are heard on the voice-over: “I couldn’t believe they wanted this man dead. Third-generation West Point, top of his class... Korea, Airborne, about a thousand decorations, etc., etc.” (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 22.25 min). The camera looks over Willard’s shoulder, allowing the viewer to read along: “Master’s Degree, Harvard University, History (Thesis: ‘The Philippines [sic!] Insurrection: American Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia, 1898-1905’)” (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 22.39 min). Kurtz’s biography is deeply embedded in the U.S. empire and spans several generations. Like his father and grandfather, Kurtz graduated from the U.S. Army’s officer school and elite academy at West Point. Intellectually, too, Kurtz belongs to the *crème de la crème* of U.S. society, having studied at Harvard University, which is often referred to as an institution of global U.S. *soft power*. He devoted his thesis to the Philippine-American War (1899-1902), in which the Filipinos fought against U.S. colonization. In

this way, *Apocalypse Now* bridges the gap from anti-colonial Filipino resistance to anti-colonial Vietnamese resistance. This also makes apparent how “The U.S. bloody suppression of resistance by Filipinos, what has come to be known as the Philippine-American War, became a precursor of Vietnam War, the U.S. using similar tactics and strategies in both cases” (Tolentino 231). In 1969, Philippine activists demonstrated against the Vietnam War by bringing to the public’s attention that both the Philippine-American War and the Vietnam War were violent expressions of the U.S. empire. These ties between the Philippines and Vietnam through U.S. imperial reach also played out directly when Philippine army officers travelled per instruction of the U.S. and Philippine governments to South Vietnam in the 1950s to instruct soldiers of the Vietnamese Army in anti-communist counterinsurgency. The Filipino officers aimed to teach their Vietnamese colleagues the knowledge they had gained from successfully fighting the communist Hukbalahap (Huk) in the post-World War 2 period in Central Luzon. In general, the Philippines needed to serve the U.S. as a role model for democracies in Asia (Man 48-102, 128). These historical ties through empire are also subversively exposed in this film sequence, along with the price the U.S. must pay for it: one man’s flagship career in the empire leads to madness, is the message that resonates. At the same time, the very physical depiction of a white, sweaty man echoes U.S. colonial discourses of health. The colonial configuration of white masculinity, meanwhile, contains another component. The frontier in the West was closed when the Pacific Ocean was reached at the end of the 19th century, thus removing the (imagined) site where (white) U.S. Americans could demonstrate their independence, combativeness (against “Native Americans”), and self-reliance. The war in the Philippine archipelago opened a new frontier where colonial masculinity was fought for (Anderson 44). John F. Kennedy confronted the consumerist and potentially effeminate young men in the postwar period with the New Frontier, which was intended to explore the potential of society, economics, science, and technology. The disaster in Southeast Asia, for which Kennedy was partly responsible, can also be understood as an additional New Frontier, where young men were to demonstrate their mascu-

linity beyond the consumer society of the postwar period (Hoffman chapter 1; Watts chapter 9).

During another period of studying the files, a sweating Willard again sits on the deck of the River Patrol Boat. We can hear the U.S. military radio station carrying the weather service all the way into the rainforest: “Good morning, Vietnam. [...] It’s about eighty-two degrees in downtown Saigon right now, also very humid” (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 1.14.08 h). The bare torsos of two other crew members attest to the presence of heat outside the capital, which makes their bodies seem even more vulnerable. This time Willard reads an article written by Kurtz. In it, Kurtz writes of the “Vietnam War,” “As long as cold beer, hot food, rock and roll, and all other amenities remain the expected norm, our conduct of the war will gain only impotence. We need fewer men and better. If they were committed, this war could be won [...]” (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 1.15.49 h). This passage highlights U.S. postwar anxieties about insufficient virility and criticisms of consumer orientation and “outward-oriented” conformity among young U.S. Americans at the expense of an “inward-oriented” “commitment” (Riesman et al.).

But the heat also comes from the air: the greatest narrative and visual effect in the film is achieved by the use of incendiary bombs, above all the napalm bombs. The metaphorical heat of the violent conflict is also found in the technological heat of war. The technological heat, which the U.S. pilots drop over the rainforest in the form of napalm bombs, appears, apart from the opening sequence, in another scene that went down in film history: Lieutenant Colonel Bill Kilgore (Robert Duvall) orders an attack on a village and has Richard Wagner’s “Ride of the Valkyries” played from the loudspeakers. The helicopters glide in aestheticized form over the sea and rainforest to the bustling FNL village, which is subsequently annihilated with the gasoline-based incendiary napalm and other weapons. This Wagnerian scene quotes D. W. Griffith’s infamous Civil War and Reconstruction drama *Birth of a Nation* (Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies* 117), in which Ku Klux Klan horsemen are staged as heroes and musically accompanied by the *Ride of the Valkyries*. Kilgore insults the defending Vietnamese as “savages” during the

attack (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 44.28 min). The U.S. empire thus contains a racist component that is added to the fire of the napalm.

Colonial psychological discourses also flow into the final sequences of the film, which I analyze under the aspect of the heat on earth, after having delineated the heat on the water and in the air (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 2.25.51 h): a decimated crew reaches Kurtz's hideout in the depths of the Cambodian jungle, which is guarded by indigenous Montagnards.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the troop members decaying and dying, they are also psychologically unraveling. The heat takes the form of stifling humidity, which manifests itself in Willard's soaking wet T-shirt and dripping hair. Finally, Willard emerges at the deepest point of his journey into the unconscious, which simultaneously involves an (evolutionary) regression into childlike, "primitive" realms, symbolized by the Montagnards, who Kurtz calls "children" (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 2.30.43 h).

When Willard enters the dark cave in which Kurtz has holed up, Willard remarks: "It smelled like slow death in there. Malaria and nightmares. This was the end of the river, all right" (*Apocalypse Now Redux* 2.37.32 h). Kurtz, languishing in delirium, wipes the beads of sweat from his head in a pointless endeavor. The colonial narratives of "neurasthenia," psychoanalysis, and heat are condensed into this moment.

### **The Heat on the Set: Postcolonial Entanglements of the Coppola Complex**

Francis Ford Coppola, the film crew, and the set have been referred to as the "Coppola Complex," which mirrors a military-industrial complex by profiting off available technology and the trauma of the Vietnam War. (Chong 154). This capitalist system became entangled in postcolonial contradictions on a social and material level (Sussman 24-28; Chong 156). In particular, the recruitment of over 200 Ifugao from Batad to portray the "primitive" Montagnards resurrected the colonial spirit. The Filipino indigenous Ifugao were known in the U.S. for their supposed "primitiveness," which the U.S. also used to justify its "civilizing" mission in the Philippines (Chong 157-158). Using indigenous populations from Northern Luzon as

Vietnamese indigenous people defaced their cultural and historical identities, thereby “[...] reifying them as a transcultural native subject” (Tolentino 239). In addition, Francis Ford Coppola very much performed within the tropes of white Hollywood masculinities as both the colonial “frontier adventurer/romantic auteur” in a jungle that needs to be pacified, and as the industrialist/entrepreneur” who would later monetize the movie’s success with an *Apocalypse Now*-themed retreat for tourists in a pacified Belize jungle (Trice 991, 996). The motif of tropicity within this tourist destination is evident. Rolando Tolentino describes how the film acts like a colonizer by “conflating identities and geographies” (244). This conflation results in an erasure of the history of the Philippines, as Laurence Castillo argues: “In erasing the Philippine presence, the colonial violence inflicted by the Americans on the Philippines and the ensuing anti-imperialist struggles of the Filipino people are likewise anomalously obliterated from the filmed geography.” (87).

The several hundred Filipino extras (Hawkins 282), one of whom died in an accident on the set, were paid three dollars a day; the 140 Vietnamese, recruited from a “Vietnam War” refugee camp in the Philippines, six dollars and 25 cents. The U.S. nationals received \$25 to \$50. The power imbalance also manifested itself in the sexual exploitation of children in Pagsanjan at the hands of some of the members of the Coppola Complex, as the *New York Times* reported (Mydans). Coppola’s collaboration with Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, whom the U.S. government supported and who provided Coppola with military infrastructure (including the Huey helicopters from the Valkyrie scene), resulted from a once colonial and, at the time of filming, neocolonial and Cold War connection between the Philippines under martial law and the United States. The same helicopters could be in use on the film set one moment and flying missions against Muslim insurgents in the south or the communist guerrillas of the New People’s Army the next (Sussman 25-26; Tolentino 237; Trice 995). *Apocalypse Now* was filmed during the period of martial law that had been declared by Marcos and which lasted from 1972 to 1981. Despite serious human rights violations for which Marcos was responsible, the U.S. provided him with military equipment for the fight against communism. And Coppola benefited

from this military equipment in turn. In addition, U.S. military personnel had secured access to military bases even after the official decolonization of the Philippines based on an asymmetrical treaty of 1947, the U.S.-Philippine Military Bases Agreement (Shalom 3-12). Before typhoon Olga destroyed the film set, the Coppola crew had resided in Olongapo (Cowie), where the U.S. Navy had occupied Subic Bay, one of these military bases. Not least, U.S. and Filipino troops were disembarked from the military bases to Vietnam during the “Vietnam War” (Lawrence 111).

At this historical juncture of decolonization and the Cold War, Sheen took a starring role both in the film and on the film set of *Apocalypse Now*.<sup>17</sup> Sheen had suffered a heart attack and received last rites from a Filipino priest before being rushed to a hospital in Manila. Officially, this incident was communicated as a “result of heat exhaustion” (Cowie 93). Sheen himself self-critically referred to the unstable U.S. heroism in the Philippine heat when he spoke to *Rolling Stone* about his near-death experience and subsequent nervous breakdown: “My spirit was exposed, I cried and cried. I turned completely gray—my eyes, my beard—all gray. [...] No one put a gun to my head and forced me to be there. I was there because I had a big ego and wanted to be in a Coppola film” (qtd. in Valley). Sheen obviously took the above-described medical-scientific discourses on the physical and psychological decay of the white man in the Philippine “tropics” literally to heart. Francis Ford Coppola also absorbed the colonial scientific diagnosis of impending madness, as his statement at the 1979 Cannes Film Festival makes clear: “My film is not a movie. My film is not about Vietnam. It is Vietnam. It’s what it was really like. It was crazy. And the way we made it was very much like the way Americans were in Vietnam. We were in the jungle, there were too many of us, we had access to too much money, too much equipment, and little by little we went insane” (qtd. in *Hearts of Darkness*, 46 sec). Thus, the jungle and the heat also symbolize the limitations that could not be overcome even by the almost obscene<sup>18</sup> amount of technology and resources that were used for the film in the Philippines and for the war in Vietnam.<sup>19</sup> In the film, Kurtz speaks to Willard and addresses this brutal obscenity through the metaphor of “fire” that connotes heat: “We train young men to drop fire



on people, but their commanders won't allow them to write 'fuck' on their airplanes because it's obscene" (*Apocalypse Now Redux*, 3.07.32 h.).

The true obscenity, Kurtz implies, lies in the violence that takes the form of air-dropped explosives. Nowhere, according to historian David L. Anderson, did the military-technological superiority in the "Vietnam War" tilt so lopsidedly in favor of the United States as in the air. The United States spent \$100 billion on this superiority. Between 1962 and 1973, over eight million explosive devices pelted Southeast Asia: 1 million over North Vietnam, 500,000 on Cambodia, three million on Laos, and four million on South Vietnam, an ally of the U.S., in support of its own ground forces. This gives South Vietnam the dubious honor of being the most bombed country in human history (D. Anderson 48).

### **Viet Thanh Nguyen's *Spy Who Emerged from the Heat*: The Struggle for Interpretive Authority**

It is these air raids that the unnamed protagonist-narrator and spy in Viet Thanh Nguyen's novel *The Sympathizer* refers to (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 186). The agent works for the South Vietnamese Army, which is allied with the United States, but also secretly informs the FNL. After the fall/liberation of Saigon—depending on one's perspective—he flees into Californian exile with his South Vietnamese superior. From there, he sends secret messages to his communist handler, encoding a nonfiction book titled *Asian Communism and the Oriental Mode of Destruction: On Understanding and Defeating the Marxist Threat to Asia*. In the following, Nguyen's spy quotes from this text, which was written by famed author Richard Hedd. Nguyen only thinly veils the historical Hedd who in reality was Richard Helms, the former director of the CIA who was responsible, among other things, for the violent Phoenix Program in the "Vietnam War." Via the character of Helms, Nguyen formulates a critique of the CIA's inadequate and stereotypical knowledge that demonstrates a limited "intelligence" concerning Southeast Asia. In doing so, he also takes the U.S. academic intelligentsia, in particular the "Orientalists," to task. They created the intellectual breeding ground that made the devastating air attacks against the Southeast Asian population possible and, in the

broadest sense, caused a Cold War culture to flourish. With *The Sympathizer*, Nguyen committed himself to the spy novel, resurrecting a genre that played a crucial role in shaping Cold War culture. Nguyen also reads the 1950s' *The Quiet American* against the grain throughout his text (Clary). But unlike John le Carré's spy, Nguyen's spy does not come in from the cold, but from the heat. Recalling his time as a student on the U.S. West Coast (even before he found his way back there as a refugee), he recounts how he infiltrated the Vietnamese student organizations on a California campus:

[...] the anti-war faction of Vietnamese foreign students, a handful of whom assembled monthly at a sterile room in the student union or in someone's apartment, passions running hot and food getting cold. I attended these parties as well as the ones thrown by the equally compact pro-war gang, differing in political tone but otherwise totally interchangeable [...]. Regardless of political clique, these students gulped from the same overflowing cup of loneliness [...] hoping for the body heat of fellow sufferers in an exile so chilly even the California sun could not warm their cold feet (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 112).

Here, the coldness of the lonely, diasporic existence is metaphorically combined with the heat of shared emotions and bodies of other Vietnamese students. The fault line goes beyond political affiliation, running instead along the divide between the "Third World" on the one hand and the "First World" on the other: the migrants perceive the Golden State as physically and emotionally cold. The communist spy longs for his homeland, closely tied to the memory of his warm-hearted Vietnamese mother and at odds with his punishing, emotionally distant French father, against whom he harbors Oedipal fantasies of murder (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 466, 472)—paralleling the figure of Willard, who murders his über-father Kurtz to the no less Oedipal soundtrack of *The Doors*. The agent's father had been a colonizing priest in "Indochina" and had pedophilic inclinations toward his then 13-year-old mother (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 267, 351-352). "The hot fever of homesickness" (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 200) precedes by only a few sentences the news that his mother has died, whereupon he experiences how "the hot lead of sorrow [...] [poured] into the mold of my body" (Nguyen,

*The Sympathizer* 201). When he joins the crew for the cinematic “Vietnam War drama” *The Hamlet* by the Greek-American “auteur”—clearly recognizable as a reference to Coppola’s *Apocalypse Now*—to ensure the authentic representation of the Vietnamese on screen, he feels transported to a native, nostalgic aggregate state on the set in Luzon: “Indeed, I felt at home the instant I stepped from the air-conditioned chamber of the airplane into the humidity-clogged jetway” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 194). And in the night quarters for the film crew, “I laid down on the slightly damp sheets, which also reminded me of home, where the humidity soaked into everything” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 195). These examples also show how Nguyen forges coalitions based on climate and belonging that do not fit the Cold War schema of the capitalist West on the one hand and the communist East on the other, but rather show how the hot, decolonizing Third World resists the cold, colonizing First World, here first and foremost the United States. The coldness manifests itself, as mentioned, in the cold Californian exile, in the air-conditioned technology of the airplane coming from the cold of the West, as well as in the bodies of the U.S. American actors. Although U.S. Americans in the novel also sweat and suffer from the heat in Southeast Asia, the main characters, and thus main culprits—“white men [who are] wearing suits,” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 468-469) who decide the fate of Vietnam in “air-conditioned rooms” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 468)—remain cold, as does Claude, the U.S. CIA agent stationed in South Vietnam: “Amid short tempers, Claude stayed cool, having lived here so long he barely perspired in the tropical humidity” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 7). Martin Sheen’s character represents the cold, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant wrapped in New England boat club garb: “[...] sporting a white T-shirt and khakis, his perfect ankles exposed because he wore no socks with his boat shoes, he was cool as ice cream even in the tropical weather” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 205). In addition, U.S. Americans use the coldness of the air conditioner as a scientific instrument of torture: “[...] the use of air conditioners [was] to keep the room at eighteen degrees Celsius, cool even by Western standards and freezing for the prisoner. This is an experiment [...] to see whether a prisoner will soften up under certain conditions” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 243). At the same

time, the spy barely survives the U.S. violence that comes in the form of hot, explosive dynamite on his own body (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 237). While Sheen's character embodies the passion of a "sexually repressed fraternity initiate" (204-205), the heat connotes lived heterosexuality and masculinity for the protagonist and other Vietnamese characters. For example, he muses about death, "The hot body of a pliant woman was what a man wanted in the cold, long afterlife [...]" (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 268).<sup>20</sup> Parallel to the U.S. protagonists, Nguyen (*The Sympathizer*) portrays the FNL protagonists as no less cold. When the protagonist was still active as a communist guerrilla in Southeast Asia in the 1960s (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 394), he met with his best friend and client Man in a Catholic church each time they conducted a clandestine exchange of information. At such a meeting, the main character hopes for absolution from his friend for his planned violent actions.

"Innocent men would die as a result of my actions, wouldn't they? Of course, men will die," Man said [...]. "But they aren't innocent. Neither are we, my friend. [...]" I shivered in the humid climate of the basilica while the dowagers droned. Contrary to some perceptions, revolutionary ideology, even in a tropical country, is not hot. It is cold, man-made. Little surprise then, that revolutionaries needed natural heat sometimes (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 145-146).

The hot wars, it can be concluded, were contested in the climatic heat of the "tropics" on the basis of cold ideologies, be they liberal-democratic, communist, or (anti-)colonial. These ideologies are all enmeshed in male guilt with religious connotations, as the scene between Man and the protagonist in a church suggests. Nguyen makes the question of guilt the central motif of the narrative, as it is clothed in the genre of confession, which in turn is explored on two levels: the "confession" can be read both as a confession in the Christian sense and in the revolutionary-communist sense, as Nguyen explains in a radio interview (Nguyen interview). The entire narrative is a flashback that the imprisoned spy presents to his tormentors in a North Vietnamese "re-education camp" in the form of a forced confession to receive communist absolution from them. The spy is tortured despite his affiliation with the FNL on the grounds that he had been exposed to,

and possibly succumbed to, capitalist ideas in the United States. One of his torturers is aware of the influence of the USA, but also of the USSR: “They [the great powers] have tested their techniques, their weapons, and their ideas on our small country. We have been the subject of that experiment they call, with a straight face, the Cold War. What a joke, given how hot the war has been for us!” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 448). The empires of the North thus turned Vietnam into a laboratory in which they tested their Cold War ideology and technology on the Vietnamese. Not unlike the torture room, Vietnam degenerates into a space of violence.

### **Soft Power of the U.S. Empire: Hollywood and Harvard**

*The Sympathizer* traces the main character’s futile efforts to influence the portrayal of Vietnamese people in *The Hamlet*, as well as how they and the Filipinos are treated on the set.<sup>21</sup> The spy is no match for the Hollywood industry, which rivals U.S. military power in imperial might. In *Apocalypse Now*, the Vietnamese serve primarily as screaming, doomed humans or as corpses, and the number of sentences they speak is kept to a minimum. With his award-winning novel, Nguyen, a Vietnamese American, influences the collective U.S. memories of a bloody war that claimed the lives of 58,000 Americans and over 3 million Vietnamese (Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies* 102). Nguyen’s work was concerned with having Vietnamese characters speak to each other and to an imagined Vietnamese readership. He was also keen to undermine Hollywood as a source of the U.S. soft power that had won “the war in memory” (Nguyen interview), even though the United States had emerged from the war as the loser (Nguyen interview).

Harvard University joins Hollywood as the equivalent East Coast center of soft power when CIA agent Claude celebrates it as the birthplace of napalm: “the very light of Western civilization” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 436). The heat of napalm burns and disfigures the face of Man, the spy’s revolutionary friend, beyond recognition. Man says to the spy, “Oh, how much it hurts! But what can I tell you besides the fact that being on fire feels like being on fire?” (Nguyen, *The Sympathizer* 435). The sticky napalm burns at extraordinarily high temperatures, which is why it is so destructive as a weapon

(Neer 16). When Harvard professor Louis Fieser and his associate Emanuel Hershberg were conducting experiments in their laboratory in Cambridge, Massachusetts, they found that divinylacetylene turned from a liquid into a gel when exposed to air. And when the gel was ignited, it burned very strongly. “[T]hey burned with an impressive sputter and sparkle,” Fieser recorded (Fieser 12). The two chemists’ laboratory work contributed to the “success story” of napalm, which was first used as a weapon in Sicily in August 1943. Between 1963 and 1973, 388,000 tons of U.S. napalm bombs were used in Southeast Asia (Neer 56, 111).

Harvard’s intellectual soft power shaped not only this incendiary weapon, associated more than any other with the “Vietnam War,” but also the bomb that dominated the new Cold War conflict: the atomic bomb. When it was first detonated, it established absolute heat as the ultimate Cold War threat scenario. In 1940, Franklin D. Roosevelt created the National Defense Research Committee (NDRC). It initiated an academic-military-industrial alliance in which scientists were given virtually inexhaustible funds to advance innovations for the war effort. Harvard chemist and president James Bryant Conant was commissioned by the NDRC to launch research into bombs, fuel, gas, and chemical problems (Neer 7-10). One Harvard College graduate played a key role in the development of the atomic bomb: theoretical physicist Robert Oppenheimer. He, along with an army of other scientists, successfully researched the creation of the atomic bomb as part of the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos National Laboratory. The site chosen for the first nuclear explosion was an inhospitable strip of desert about 320 km south of Los Alamos. The explosion had blinded the scientists before they were overwhelmed by the heat and pressure wave as witnesses to the nuclear age (Hunner 67-69). Radioactivity had left desolate marks on humans and animals, as well as the landscape around Ground Zero. The name *Hot Canyon* was given to the worst contaminated area (Marnham 235). This hot, nuclear desert zone, of course, bears no comparison to the Japanese experience with the atomic bomb. To describe the heat emitted by the atomic bomb, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, nine months after the dropping of “Little Boy” on Hiroshima and “Fat Man” on Nagasaki, used the following formulations:

“The enormous heat produced by an atomic bomb has no true counterpart in ordinary explosions. [...] In Japan, people within several hundred yards of the bomb were charred black, while those more than a mile away received a severe ‘sunburn’” (Marshak et al. 6).

Uranium, a central component of “Little Boy,” had been imported by the U.S. mainly from the Belgian Congo through the mining company *Union Minière du Haut Katanga*, which had once acquired the rights to the minerals from King Leopold II who had established the Congo Free State. Between 1943 and 1945, 8,000-10,000 tons of uranium ore were shipped to the United States. This process relied on a colonial infrastructure, as part of the Belgian colonial state and its predecessor, the Congo Free State, which had cost the lives of up to 10 million Congolese (Marnham 138-139, 215-218; Nzongola-Ntalaja 22). The local population was harnessed into the Manhattan Project via forced labor and, if necessary, driven with the *chicotte*, a whip (Marnham 216). The uranium transports, which went from Kinshasa (called Léopoldville during the colonial period) to Matadi, from where it was shipped to the United States, took the same route as that followed by Joseph Conrad on his journey through the Congo (Marnham 218). In his diary, the Polish-British writer Conrad, who had signed on with the Belgian company *Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo (SAB)*, recorded: “Arrived at Matadi on the 13th of June 1890” (Conrad, “The Congo Diary” 99). *SAB*, like many competing companies in the late 19th century, had turned its focus to the exploitation of rubber due to falling ivory prices in Europe (Gondola 66-67). Last but not least, the Matadi-Kinshasa route takes Conrad’s character Marlow deeper and deeper into the “heart of darkness” of European atrocities, the culmination of which is embodied by the colonizer Kurtz, with whom *Apocalypse Now* begins: “While Willard, having completed his mission, sets himself down from the blazing shore downstream from Kurtz, the latter breathes with his last breath, ‘The horror! The horror!’” (*Apocalypse Now Redux*, 3.09.03 h).

## Conclusion

In Coppola's cinematic treatment, heat marks the end of U.S. naiveté and the realization of its own violent abysses, as well as the limited influence of the U.S. on other countries. In the heat, the boundaries between the conscious and the unconscious, between reality and fantasy, and between right and wrong dissolve. The omnipresence of heat in the film, in which it is itself also an actor, connotes vulnerable masculinity; it threatens to destroy male bodies that express violence physiologically through intense sweating. The heat, however, represents not only conflict and the threat of the adversary, but also a prolonged U.S. colonial project, succinctly expressed in the Philippines and reimaged in the "Vietnam War." Madness then is the consequence of the U.S. empire, as suggested in the character of Kurtz. Despite the film's anti-imperial critique, older colonial scientific discourses about "degenerating white bodies in the hot tropics" are adapted for the Cold War context. Sheen and Coppola drew on these colonial narratives when talking about the experience of filming in the Philippines. A (post)colonial continuity can also be seen in the fact that the film could only be made thanks to an infrastructure that sprang from the U.S. colonial state in the Philippine archipelago and continued during the Cold War. Further research should test the thesis of heat against other Vietnam movies during the Cold War, such as *Full Metal Jacket* or the *Deer Hunter*.

The heat in the novel *The Sympathizer* reveals the text as a migration narrative about the loss of a home and mother: The longing for Southeast Asia burns hot. The new existence in the U.S., on the other hand, makes the diasporic Vietnamese shiver. It is the Vietnamese bodies—in exile and at home—that, unlike the super-cooled Anglo-Saxon bodies, are flesh and blood and can generate vibrant heterosexuality. Using the metaphor of heat, Nguyen creates the following binaries in his Cold War text that defy East-West logic: he traces the remembered conflict first along the line of the First World (cold) and the Third World (heat), and second, along the line of the men who actively participate in the conflicts—independent of their ideology—(cold) and the rest. Finally, geographical, institutional, and metaphorical links can be made between *Apocalypse Now*, the set in the Philippines,



and *The Sympathizer*, ultimately leading to the heat of the exploding atomic bomb—one of the highest temperature points of the Cold War.

## Notes

1. The author originally published this article in German: Wirth, Christa. "Gewaltige Hitze: *Apocalypse Now* zwischen (De)kolonisierung und Kaltem Krieg." *Der kalte Krieg: Kältegrade eines globalen Konflikts. Nach Feierabend: Zürcher Jahrbuch für Wissensgeschichte*, edited by Silvia Berger Ziauddin et al., diaphanes, 2017, pp. 61-84 (copyright). This article was translated into English, updated, and revised by the author. For their helpful comments, I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers. For critical reading of the German version, I would like to thank: Silvia Berger Ziauddin, David Eugster, Lisa Schurrer, Stefan Sandmeier, and Barbara Holler.
2. Nevertheless, the more common term "Vietnam War" will be used in this article.
3. In this article, "Third World" and "Global South" are used interchangeably. The term "Third World" itself dates back to the Cold War; "Global South" is a product of the 1990s.
4. Tropicalism accessed through heat is as an extrapolation of the concept of 19th century Philippine nationalists' tropicality "which reversed the colonizers' racial-geographic prejudice and asserted an identity as civilizable tropical people capable of genius." (Aguilar 2016).
5. The violence and break down is intrinsic to the empire though not to the individual soldier, as part of the concept of PTSD is that it can happen to anybody given the circumstances, independent from their individual make-up (Goltermann Chapter 4).
6. In this text, the analyses and time references refer exclusively to *Apocalypse Now Redux*. Coppola did not shoot any new scenes for *Apocalypse Now Redux*, and the motifs are the same in the *Redux* version as in the 1979 version. All of the film passages discussed in this text, with one exception at 1:15:49 h, occur in both in *Apocalypse Now* and *Apocalypse Now Redux*.
7. In *Apocalypse Now*, the character "Chief" reads a newspaper article about the Manson Family murders in 1969.
8. After the opening of formerly communist archives.
9. For the Chinese perspective, see for example: Jian.
10. Marguerite Valentine writes how reality and fiction cannot be separated in this scene. It symbolizes the unconscious.
11. The US disparagingly called the FNL "Viet Cong."
12. Although the physical resilience of white men in the tropics was already conceivable in 1905.
13. Linda Constanzo Cahir writes about the parallels between Conrad's short stories and Coppola's film.

14. This othering also happens vis-à-vis the named Black U.S. soldiers on the boat heading upstream, as they all perish, unlike the white U.S. soldiers (Dawson 229-230).
15. For an analysis of the colonial-medical discourse on “degeneration” in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, see Charlotte Rogers, Chapter 1.
16. Montagnards is a collective French term for various indigenous groups in the Vietnamese highlands; see Chong, 157.
17. Marita Sturken draws a parallel between the failure of the film crew in the Philippine jungle and the failure of the U.S. soldiers in the Vietnamese jungle; see Sturken 98.
18. In the context of images of Vietnamese people disseminated in the media in the U.S. and of violence by and against Vietnamese bodies, Chong speaks of the “oriental obscene.”
19. Baudrillard uses the example of *Apocalypse Now* to compare the power of the U.S. film industry with the power of the U.S. military industry (60).
20. Further examples of heat and sexuality/masculinity in *The Sympathizer*: pp. 313, 315, 351.
21. Nguyen is not the first author with a transnational yet U.S. voice to literarily adapt *Apocalypse Now* as well as the story of its filming. Filipino-American writer Jessica Hagedorn had already fictionalized the “Coppola Complex” in the Philippines in 2003 in the novel *Dream Jungle*.

## Works Cited

- Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr. "Romancing Tropicality: Ilustrado Portraits of the Climate in the Late Nineteenth Century." *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, vol 64, 2016, pp. 417-454.
- Anderson, David L. "Introduction: The Vietnam War and Its Enduring Historical Relevance." *The Columbia History of the Vietnam War*, edited by David L. Anderson, Columbia University Press, 2011, pp. 1-89.
- Anderson, Warwick. *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*. Duke University Press, 2006.
- Apocalypse Now*. Directed by Francis F. Coppola, American Zoetrope, 1979.
- Apocalypse Now Redux*. Directed by Francis F. Coppola and Kim Aubry, American Zoetrope, 2001.
- Arnold, David. *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture and European Expansion*. Blackwell Publishers. 1996.
- Arnold, David. "Illusory Riches: Representations of the Tropical World, 1840-1950." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, vol 21, 2000, pp. 6-18.
- Arnold, David. *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape and Science, 1800-1856*. Washington University Press. 2005.
- Barker, Thomas, and Ekky Imanjaya. "Transnational Exploitation Cinema in Southeast Asia: The Case of Indonesia and the Philippines." *Southeast Asia on Screen: From Independence to Financial Crisis (1945-1998)*, edited by Gaik Cheng Khoo et al., Amsterdam University Press, 2020, pp. 233-253.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser, University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Bowd, Gavin P., and Daniel W. Clayton. "Geographical Warfare in the Tropics: Yves Lacoste and the Vietnam War". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 193, 2013, pp. 627-646.
- Brickman, Celia. *Aboriginal Populations in the Mind: Race and Primitivity in Psychoanalysis*. Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Cahir, Lisa Constanzo. "Narratological Parallels in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now." *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Casebook*, edited by Gene M. Moore, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 183-196.
- Castillo, Laurence M. S. "Monsters in the Pacific: The Philippines in the Hollywood Geopolitical Imaginary." *Kritika Kultura*, vol. 29, 2017, pp. 80-100.
- Chong, Sylvia Shin Huey. *The Oriental Obscene: Violence and Racial Fantasies in the Vietnam War*. Duke University Press, 2012.
- Clary, Grayson. "Spy vs. History." *The New Inquiry*, 1 May 2015, <https://thenewinquiry.com/spy-vs-history/>. Accessed 31 Dec. 2021.

- Crocq, Marc-Antoine and Louis Crocq. "From Shell Shock and War Neurosis to Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A History of Psychotraumatology." *Clinical Research*, vol. 2, 2000, pp. 47-55.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness: Edited with Introduction and Notes by Owen Knowles*. Penguin Classics, 2007 (orig. 1899).
- Conrad, Joseph. "The Congo Diary (First Notebook). Edited with Notes by Robert Hampson." *Heart of Darkness: Edited with Introduction and Notes by Owen Knowles*, Joseph Conrad, Penguin Classics, 2007 (orig. 1899), pp. 99-109.
- Cowie, Peter. *The Apocalypse Book: The Making of Francis Ford Coppola's Epic Based on Unprecedented Access to His Private Archives*. Da Capo Press 2001.
- Dawson, Amanda. "Apocalypse Now: Performing Imperialism and the Apocalypse." *Popular Culture Studies Journal*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2021, pp. 224-241.
- Dommann, Monika. "Nach Dien Bien Phu: Pierre Schoendoerffers and Raoul Coutards Indochinakriege." *Mittelweg*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2015, pp. 19-40.
- Driver, Felix, and Luciana Martins. "Views and Visions of the Tropical World." *Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*, edited by Driver, Felix, and Luciana Martins, Chicago University Press, 2005, pp. 3-20.
- Farrell, John. "Nixon's Vietnam Treachery." *The New York Times*, 31. Dec. 2016, [www.nytimes.com/2016/12/31/opinion/sunday/nixons-vietnam-treachery.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-left-region&region=opinion-ccol-left-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-left-region&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/31/opinion/sunday/nixons-vietnam-treachery.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=opinion-c-col-left-region&region=opinion-ccol-left-region&WT.nav=opinion-c-col-left-region&_r=1). Accessed 4 Jan. 2017.
- Fieser, Louis. *The Scientific Method: A Personal Account of Unusual Projects in War and Peace*, distributed by Reinhold Pub. Corp, 1964.
- Gaiduk, Ilya V. *Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1954-1963*. Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003.
- Goltermann, Svenja. *Opfer: Die Wahrnehmung von Krieg und Gewalt in der Moderne*. S. Fischer, 2017.
- Gondola, Ch. Didier. *The History of Congo*. Greenwood Press, 2002.
- Gonzalez, Vernadette V. "Headhunter Itineraries: The Philippines as America's Dream Jungle." *The Global South*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 144-172.
- Greiner, B. et al., editors. *Heiße Kriege im Kalten Krieg*. Hamburger Edition, HIS Verlag, 2006.
- Guan, Ang Cheng. *Ending the Vietnam War: The Vietnamese Communists' Perspective*. Routledge, 2004.
- Hawkins, Michael Gary. *Co-Producing the Postcolonial: U.S. Philippine Cinematic Relations, 1946-1986*, unpublished dissertation 2008.
- Hagedorn, Jessica. *Dream Jungle*. The Viking Press, 2003.
- Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*. Directed by Eleanor Coppola et al., Triton Pictures/Paramount Pictures, 1991.

- Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Hunner, Jon. *Inventing Los Alamos: The Growth of an Atomic Community*. University of Oklahoma Press, 2004.
- Jian, Chen: "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War, 1964-1969." *The China Quarterly*, vol. 142, 1995, pp. 356-387.
- Jones, Edgar, and Simon Wessely. *Shell Shock to PTSD: Military Psychiatry from 1900 to the Gulf War*. Psychology Press, 2005.
- Lawrence, Mark Atwood. *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Le Carré, John. *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*. Victor Gollancz & Pan, 1964.
- Marnham, Patrick. *Snake Dance: Journeys Beneath a Nuclear Sky*. Chatto & Windus, 2014.
- Marshak, R. E. et al. "Atomic Bomb Damage—Japan and USA." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1946, pp. 6-7.
- Man, Simeon. *Soldiering Through Empire: Race and the Making of the Decolonizing Pacific*. University of California Press, 2018.
- McMahon, Robert J. "Introduction." *The Cold War in the Third World*, edited by Robert J. McMahon, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 1-10.
- Milam, Rona, editor. *The Vietnam War in Popular Culture: The Influence of America's Most Controversial War on Everyday Life. With a foreword by George C. Herring*. Praeger, 2017.
- Munson, Edward L. *The Theory and Practice of Military Hygiene*. W. Wood and Co., 1901.
- Mydans, Seth. "In a Philippine Town, Child Prostitution, Despite Protests, Is a Way of Life." *The New York Times*, 5 Feb. 1989, <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/02/05/world/in-a-philippine-town-child-prostitution-despite-protests-is-a-way-of-life.html>. Accessed 3 Jan. 2022.
- Neer, Robert M. *Napalm: An American Biography*. Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *The Sympathizer*. Grove Press, 2015.
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*. Harvard University Press 2016.
- Nguyen, Viet Thanh. Interview of Terry Gross with Viet Thanh Nguyen. "Author Viet Thanh Nguyen Discusses *The Sympathizer* and His Escape from Vietnam." *Fresh Air on National Public Radio (NPR)*, 17 May 2016, [www.npr.org/2016/11/04/500534334/author-viet-thanh-nguyen-discusses-the-sympathizer-and-his-escape-from-vietnam](http://www.npr.org/2016/11/04/500534334/author-viet-thanh-nguyen-discusses-the-sympathizer-and-his-escape-from-vietnam). Accessed 7 February 2017.
- Nixon, Richard. "Cuba, Castro and John. F. Kennedy." *The Reader's Digest*, November 1964, pp. 283-300.
- Nzongola-Ntalaja, Georges. *The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People's History*. Zed Books, 2002.

- Painter, David S. "Explaining U.S. Relations with the Third World." *Diplomatic History*, vol. 19, 1995, pp. 525-548.
- Rafael, Vincent. "White Love: Surveillance and Nationalist Resistance in the United States' Colonization of the Philippines." *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, edited by Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Paese, Duke University Press, 1993, pp. 185-218.
- Riesman, D., et al. *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*. Yale University Press, 2001 (orig. 1959).
- Rogers, Charlotte. *Jungle Fever: Exploring Madness and Medicine in Twentieth-Century Tropical Narratives*. Vanderbilt University Press, 2012.
- Shalom, Stephen R. "Securing the U.S.-Philippine Military Bases Agreement of 1947." *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1990, pp. 3-12.
- Simmons, Allan H. "Reading Heart of Darkness." *The New Cambridge Companion to Joseph Conrad*, edited by J. H. Stape, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 15-28.
- Solomon, Keith. "The Spectacle of War and the Specter of 'The Horror': *Apocalypse Now* and American Imperialism." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 22-31.
- Sussman, Gerald. "Bulls in the (Indo)China Shop: Coppola's 'Vietnam' Revisited." *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1992, pp. 24-28.
- Sturken, Marita. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. University of California Press, 1997.
- Taussig, Michael. *My Cocaine Museum*. Chicago University Press, 2004.
- Tolentino, Rolando B. "Popular Discourse of Vietnam in the Philippines." *Philippine Studies*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2002, pp. 230-250.
- Tomasulo, Frank P. "The Politics of Ambivalence: *Apocalypse Now* as Prowar and Antiwar Film." *From Hanoi to Hollywood: The Vietnam War in American Film*, edited by Linda Dittmar und Gene Michaud, Rutgers University Press, 1990, pp. 145-158.
- Trice, Jasmine Nadua. "Location Shooting in 'the Wild East': Risk and Masculinity in Hollywood Productions in the Philippines." *Feminist Media Studies*, vol. 17, no. 6, 2017, pp. 988-1004.
- Valentine, Marguerite. "Death's Dream Kingdom: The Representation of the Unconscious in *Apocalypse Now*." *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, vol. 26, no. 3, 2010, pp. 343-359.
- Valley, Jean. "Martin Sheen: Heart of Darkness Heart of Gold", *Rolling Stone*, 1 November 1979, <https://www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-news/martin-sheen-heart-of-darkness-heart-of-gold-80879/>. Accessed 31 Dec. 2021.

- Vicedo, Marga. "Cold War Emotions: Mother Love and the War over Human Nature." *Cold War Social Science: Knowledge Production, Liberal Democracy, and Human Nature*, edited by Mark Solovey and Hamilton Cravens, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 233-249.
- Watts, Steven. *JFK and the Masculine Mystique: Sex and Power on the New Frontier*. Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2016.
- Weinstein, Philip, and Srilata Ravi. "Intersecting Discourses on Tropicality and Disease Causation: Representations of Réunion's Mosquito-borne Epidemics in Scientific Literature." *Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 37, 2009, pp. 511-531.
- Westad, Odd A. *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Westerink, Herman, editor. *Sigmund Freuds Werke: Totem und Tabu. Herausgegeben und neu kommentiert*, Wien 2013.