

SPEAKING BODIES, VISIBLE VOICES: NARRATIVE TENSION IN COPPOLA'S *APOCALYPSE NOW: REDUX* (2001)

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ABSTRACT

Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now: Redux* (2001), a 2001 re-release of his 1979 Vietnam War epic, sparked significant discussions among both academic scholars and mainstream media. The extended version, which features almost an hour-long addition of new scenes, challenged the question of the film's continued relevance within the evolving Hollywood industry. While the original version may have highlighted the horror and dehumanization of the Vietnam War, it was also criticized for depicting women as one-dimensional sexual objects and effectively silencing their voices. However, by utilizing Verstraten's notion of filmic narrative, Mulvey's visual pleasure, and Stark's narrative voicelessness, this research aims to show how narrative tension is displayed in *Apocalypse Now: Redux* and how it highlights the representation of the female characters' subjectivity. We argue that the Redux version offers a notable difference from the stereotypical portrayal of women in war film. By incorporating the newly added scenes, *Apocalypse Now: Redux* provides the female characters with more agency and individuality, allowing them to move beyond the limitation of being mere decorations.

1. INTRODUCTION

When Francis Ford Coppola made the decision to re-release his award-winning movie, *Apocalypse Now* (1979), in 2001, a number of audience members, media outlets, and academic scholars raised doubts regarding his choice. By centering the newly added scenes around the female characters, the extended version adds an interesting layer to the film's narrative dynamics. *Apocalypse Now: Redux* (2001), also commonly referred to as *Apocalypse When?* and *Apocalypse Too Late* by the press (Hellmann, 2007), has successfully introduced new significant discourses, particularly in the field of gender studies within the American Vietnam War film industry.

Apocalypse Now: Redux is an extended and re-edited version of Coppola's award-winning 1979 Vietnam War film, *Apocalypse Now*. Through the term "Redux", which implies a revisiting or revival, Coppola took the opportunity to delve deeper into the cinematic vision by re-releasing the "initial version" of the movie. In *Apocalypse Now: Redux*, Coppola reintegrated a total of 49 minutes of new scenes and material that were initially removed from the theatrical release. While the initial plot remains focused on Captain Willard's secret mission to terminate Colonel Kurtz and his regime in a Cambodian outpost, the Redux version introduces significant modifications to the storyline. The narrative includes the portrayal of the

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female characters who were previously invisible, out of the spotlight, or even entirely excluded in the original version.

Although the movie received mixed reviews from the media and critics, *Apocalypse Now* is still considered as one of Coppola's prominent works which had remarkably enjoyed critical success from the beginning (Hellmann, 1982). Other than grossing \$100 million worldwide, the movie also won a number of prestigious awards, including the Palm d'Or award in the 1979 Cannes Film Festival (Norris, 1998). Following *Apocalypse Now*'s massive success in the market, Coppola unexpectedly released an extended version of the movie, twenty-two years later. In an interview with Vanity Fair Magazine, Coppola reveals that he made the critical choice to "put things back in", believing that the incorporation of the removed scenes would give the original version a better sense of the theme (Coppola, 2019). The Redux version includes two major scenes, which will be referred to as the helicopter scene and the French plantation scene. Both scenes feature female characters who were not highlighted in the original version.

The reappearance of the female characters in *Apocalypse Now: Redux* contributes significantly to the discussion about women's representation in the movie genre and American cinema. War films have accomplished significant results on both commercial success and critical acclaim (Carruthers, 2010). Not only because war films are well-known for their intriguing storylines and powerful cinematography (Gillespie, 1985), but they also serve as a platform for the exploration and glorification of traditional masculine ideals, behaviors, and experiences (Donald & MacDonald, 2011). The portrayal of idealized masculinity in war films aligns closely with Connell's (1987) idea of hegemonic masculinity. This concept refers to certain forms of masculinity, characterized by dominance and privilege, that perpetuate gender inequalities and maintain underlying power structure (Connell, 1987). Hegemonic masculinity then manifests as varying degrees of gender discrimination among communities, with the pattern of male dominance persisting across diverse cultural and historical contexts (Ataria, 2016).

The glorification of traditional masculine notions can also be seen in Vietnam War films produced by American cinema. Lichty and Carroll (2008) argues that the early-released American Vietnam War films have the tendency to focus more on the experiences on the battlefield. These characteristics are evident in the Vietnam War films that were made in the late 1970s, including *Apocalypse Now*, which show the Vietnam War as a tragic and catastrophic event, offering a somber portrayal of the harsh realities of war (Willoquet-Maricondi, 1994). Numerous American Vietnam War films are produced, written, and created by men, which results in a significant underrepresentation of women's roles in and contributions in the narratives (Furia & Bielby, 2009; Jeffords, 1989; Mithers, 1986). Women in these films are often relegated to stereotypically feminine roles, such as nurses, romantic interests, or mothers. These roles typically emphasize caregiving, emotional support, or romantic interests, thereby reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. The stereotypical feminine archetypes in war film mirrors Mulvey's (1975) idea of visual pleasure. Hollywood cinema, according to Mulvey (1975), frequently assigns active roles to male characters, positioning them as the driving force behind the narrative, while relegating female characters to passive sexual objects designed for satisfying the male gaze.



Furthermore, in the context of American Vietnam war films, male characters are frequently chosen to be the narrators to emphasize both the individual masculine ideals and the collective national identities (Selig, 1993). The use of the male voice-over prioritizes and emphasizes the perspective of the soldiers, effectively framing the entire narrative from their viewpoints. However, by centering the narration on the male experience, these films neglect or overlook a number of critical dimensions, such as racial and sexual dynamics (Selig, 1993), that contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the war's complexities. In the study of narratology, voice is an important aspect of a narrative, as it serves as a primary tool in conveying the story and perspective (Genette, 1972). While narrative voice may be a strong element in storytelling, it can also be a double-edged sword for the characters who are situated in the margin of the narrative. Stark (2015) emphasized the idea of the unequal opportunity to express themselves through voice as narrative voicelessness. In the specialized field of film narratology, the scope of voice extends to include other sounds, which are considered as auditive narrators (Verstraten, 2009). However, a voice can also reinforce a narrative problem within the film's story, which Verstraten (2009) refers to as narrative tension.

Given the significant impacts of the two versions of *Apocalypse Now*, a number of academic scholars have conducted research about the film, each addressing the film from different angles and examining a wide range of issues. Some of the most frequently studied topics are about American (army) masculinity (Ataria, 2016; Kılıçarslan, 2009; Lacy, 2003; Prorokova, 2018; Roberts & Easingwood, 1997), mythology and symbolism (Garcia-Escriva, 2017; Harrell, 1982; Kujawska-Lis, 2000), nations and the concept of national identity (Lacy, 2003; Nguyen, 2015; Zapata, 1996), intertextual adaptation and reinterpretation (Norris, 1998; Sherry, 2012), and (re)imagination of the Vietnam War (Norris, 1998; Verrips, 2010). However, of the many studies that exist, there has been little discussion of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now: Redux* which leads to the field of film narratology, which is the primary focus of this research. This study will focus on analyzing how the narrative tension between visual and auditive narrators in *Apocalypse Now: Redux* plays a crucial role in showing the representation of the female characters' subjectivity.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The re-release of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now: Redux* has fueled ongoing discussions in both academic schemes and popular culture communities. Some of the most frequently studied topics are about minority groups representation (Demory, 2007; Hellmann, 2007; Nguyen, 2015; Shao & Liu, 2015), cinematic techniques used on both the original and Redux version (Cahir, 1992; Gillespie, 1985; Hansen, 1980), as well as the films' narrative structure (Nyerges, 2014; Watson, 1981). Shao and Liu (2015) underscores how the newly added scenes in the Redux version provide greater emphasis on minority groups, especially the female characters, within the film's broader storyline. Hellmann (2007) also argues that the portrayal of the Playboy Bunnies in the Redux version works as a metaphor to the American consumerism culture from the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, the issue of female characters' portrayal in *Apocalypse Now* is also underscored by Nyerges (2014), by arguing how Coppola features a Close-Up shot of Willard and a stone from Kurtz's temple, which resemblance the face of a young Vietnamese



woman, becomes a symbol of the conflict which will be the main theme of the film. However, of the many studies that exist, there has been little discussion of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now: Redux* that examines narrative tension as the main issue, which is the subject matter of this research. This study will focus on analyzing how the visual and auditive elements of the cinematic structure operate in portraying the female characters, as well as how the intricate dynamics between the elements contributes to their autonomy.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study will be carried out by employing a close reading of *Apocalypse Now: Redux* using several theoretical frameworks, including Mulvey's (1975) concept of visual pleasure, Stark's (2015) notion of narrative voicelessness, as well as Verstraten's (2009) idea of narrative tension. Initially, we will identify the visual elements that indicates Mulvey's (1975) idea of visual pleasure through an in-depth analysis of the *mise-en-scène*, focusing on aspects such as cinematography, lighting, and camera techniques. Then, we will explore the auditive elements that indicates Stark's (2015) concept of narrative voicelessness by examining sound design, dialogue, music, and other noises present in the film.

Subsequently, this study will delve into the relationship between the visual and auditive narrators in the scenes involving female characters, and how this interplay implies narrative tension as outlined by Verstraten (2009). By closely analyzing scenes where the visual and auditory narrators create differing narratives, we will delve into the complexities and dualities of the female characters' portrayal. This detailed examination will focus on how the visual narrative, conveyed through elements like framing, costume, and dialogue, may present a certain perspective or emphasize specific aspects of the female characters.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objectified and Voiceless Women in *Apocalypse Now: Redux*

The typical images of women in American Vietnam War film are limited into three categories, the whore, the virgin or Madonna, and the deceitful man killer (Jeffords, 1989). These archetypes serve as convenient narrative devices that reinforce traditional gender roles and perpetuate stereotypical representations of femininity within the context of war. In *Apocalypse Now: Redux*, the female characters are objectified and marginalized, portrayed through both visual and auditory elements, thus reducing them to mere narrative tools aimed at motivating or comforting the male characters. Furthermore, the portrayal of female characters in war films often reflects a broader societal narrative where women are depicted as having limited agency and control over their own actions.

The objectification of female bodies in *Apocalypse Now: Redux* is not only evident but also prominently showcased in two significant scenes, namely those involving the Playboy Bunnies and the French plantation. The portrayal of the Playboy Bunnies, brought in to perform at a USO show located at an outpost along the Nung River, is a stark illustration of overt objectification. The portrayal of the Playboy Bunnies aligns with Mulvey's (1975) idea, as they



are reduced to objects of visual pleasure. Their presence serves as an illustration of women's objectification within both cinematic narrative and society at large.



Picture 1. Miss Sandra Beatty (left) and Miss Terri Terray (right) performing at the USO Show.

The visual elements of the film intentionally highlight the female characters, particularly Miss Sandra Beatty (Playmate of the Month: August), and Miss Terri Terray (Playmate of the Month: May), by directing the camera angles and framing towards their bodies and revealing clothes. By utilizing Medium Long Shot (Thompson & Bowen, 2009), *Apocalypse Now: Redux* emphasizes the details in their clothing and gender. Furthermore, the shot also isolate the Bunnies' particular body parts, such as their waist and torso, but excluding their faces. This technique further dehumanizes and mutilate the women by denying their agency and reducing them to mere objects of sexual desire.

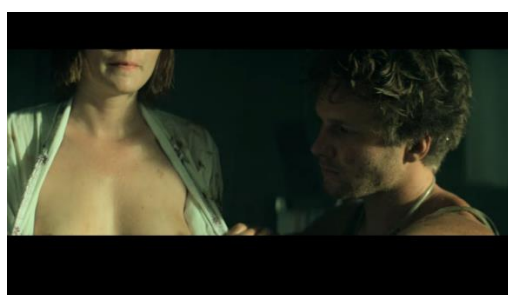
Moreover, the stark contrast between the vibrant lighting and flashy costumes worn by the Bunnies versus the muted, darker tones of the male audience's surroundings is notable. This difference ensures that the Bunnies stand out as the central focus of the scene, captivating the audience's gaze and directing it towards the women's bodies. Through the use of these visual techniques, the filmmakers not only objectify the female characters but also highlight the underlying power dynamics, where women are depicted as objects of male desire within a predominantly masculine context.

Another scene involving the Bunnies takes place in a helicopter, where they become stranded at an abandoned outpost and are “forced” into exchanging sexual favors for gallons of fuel. This specific scene is one of the additions in the Redux version of the film. Here, the women's bodies are not only blatantly exposed, but the use of the natural lighting serves to accentuate the objectification of their bodies.





Picture 2. Miss Terri Terray performs sexual acts for Chef.



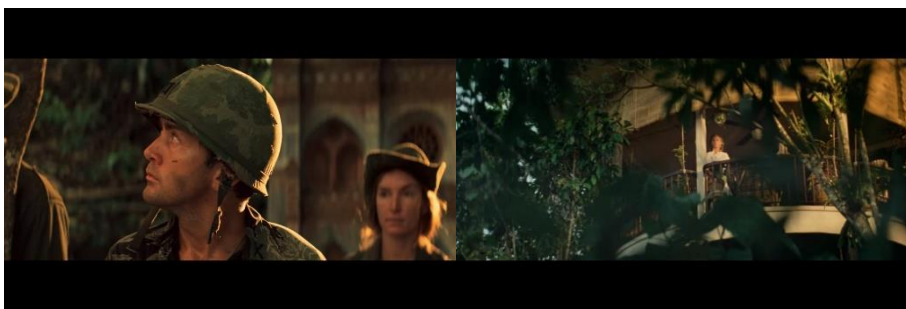
Picture 3. Miss Carrie Foster performs sexual acts for Lance.

The lighting employed in the scene creates a high-contrast effect on the Bunnies' skin, accentuating the contours and textures of their bodies. This technique deliberately blurs out surrounding elements, ensuring that the Bunnies remain the central focus of attention. Not only does it draw the viewer's eye to their bodies, but it also amplifies the visual impact of their nudity.

In **Picture 3.**, the camera is strategically positioned in front of Miss Carrie Foster's body, with a focus on her exposed chest. This downward angle and framing serve to separate their bodies from their faces, essentially reducing them to mere objects of visual consumption. Furthermore, their partially open shirts and exposed breasts are prominently featured in the shot. The deliberate choice of such revealing clothing further intensifies the sexualization of their appearance, thus reinforcing their objectification within the narrative.

Another instance of the objectification of the female characters in *Apocalypse Now: Redux* is also evident in the French plantation scene, where a young French woman appears to be seen in the balcony. She watches the burial ceremony of Clean's death silently.





Picture 4. Willard looking up at Roxanne.

In this scene, although her name has not yet been revealed, Madame Roxanne Sarraut is strategically positioned at the center of the frame (Thompson & Bowen, 2009). This central placement makes her the primary focus. The foliage and branches in the background create a natural frame around her, guiding the audiences' gaze directly towards her. Roxanne's white dress also contrasts sharply with the darker, muted tones of the surrounding plants and architecture of the house. This technique highlights her presence, making her more visible and emphasizing her importance in the unfolding narrative.



Picture 5. Roxanne at the dinner table

In another scene, Roxanne is illuminated by a warm, golden light that distinctly sets her apart from the other characters. This natural light, presumably coming from the window behind her, creates a glow that highlights her presence and draws the attention to her. This is an example of the usage of a Low-key lighting which emphasizes the focal point of the scene (Thompson & Bowen, 2009). In contrast, the surrounding characters are either shrouded in shadow or illuminated by a cooler, less intense light. This difference in lighting subtly diminishes their prominence, causing them to fade in the background.

Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that Roxanne's portrayal in the film predominantly aligns with Willard's perspective. Throughout the sequences, Roxanne is consistently depicted through Willard's point of view shots. In her initial introduction in **Picture**



4., Willard's acknowledgment of her presence is captured as he gazes up at the balcony. In the subsequent scene, where Roxanne is emphasized by the camera in **Picture 5.**, the framing consistently places her in line of Willard's sight as she was observed by the Over-the-Shoulder shot (Thompson & Bowen, 2009) behind his shoulder. This further raises the question of whether Roxanne would have featured prominently in the film if Willard had not initially paid attention to her presence. This cinematic approach not only underscores the centrality of Willard's viewpoint, but also raises intriguing inquiries about Roxanne's presence tethered to his perception.

Another aspect of gendered social tension in *Apocalypse Now: Redux* is the marginalization of female characters through the use of auditive elements in the film. The auditory marginalization serves to further reinforce the secondary status of the female characters, highlighting the diminished presence of women within the narrative. Moreover, the auditory marginalization is predominantly experienced by the Vietnamese female characters.



Picture 6. Vietnamese woman throws a grenade to an American helicopter.

In one of the most powerful scenes from *Apocalypse Now* franchise (Jeffords, 1989), a Vietnamese woman is seen throwing a grenade at an American helicopter stationed in a Vietnamese school. This scene, despite its significant effect towards the film's story, leaves the young woman nameless and unheard. She shouts a few words in Vietnamese, but her words are not included in the subtitles, reducing her speech to mere sounds.

The exclusion of the Vietnamese woman's voice in this scene is significant because it silences an essential part of the story. By muting her words, the film highlights a broader theme of marginalization and erasure that Vietnamese characters' experience throughout the narrative. This inability to express themselves fully is what Stark (2015) describes as narrative voicelessness.





Picture 7. A Vietnamese woman shot by Willard.

Another instance of narrative voicelessness in *Apocalypse Now: Redux* is apparent in the Sampan scene. While Willard and his crew travels upriver, they encounter a sampan loaded with supplies and occupied by several men and a woman. A sudden burst of rage from Clean and Lance leads to the brutal killing of all the men aboard, leaving the woman severely injured. Despite Chief's suggestion to take her for medical help, Willard eventually kills her.

In her final moments, the woman speaks a few words in Vietnamese. However, similar to the woman in the grenade scene, her words are not included in the subtitle. This omission made her subjected to narrative voicelessness, as her ability to convey her thoughts and emotions was stripped away.



Picture 8. Kurtz's Cambodian mistress.

Lastly, narrative voicelessness is also apparent in the scene involving Kurtz's Cambodian mistress. As Willard moves forward with his mission to kill Kurtz, he is followed by a shadow, believed to be Kurtz's Cambodian mistress. Throughout this scene, she remains entirely mute. Her silence is a prominent detail that highlights the marginalization of her within the story.



The Unraveling of Narrative Tension

In *Apocalypse Now: Redux*, the interplay between visual and auditive narrators that causes narrative tension is particularly evident in the scenes that features the female characters. One notable instance of this dynamic occurs during the helicopter scene. This scene portrays Miss Carrie Foster (Playmate of The Year) and Miss Terry Terray (Miss May) engaging in intimate and sexual acts in return for fuel.



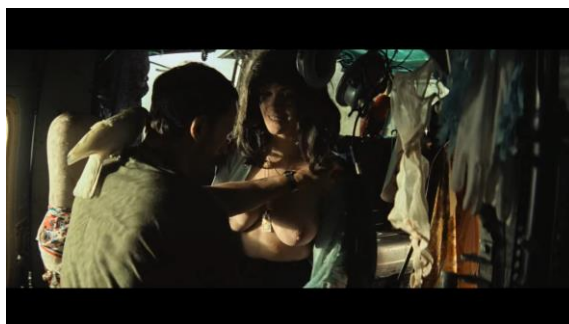
Picture 9. A High-angle shot and Low-key lighting of Miss Carrie Foster.

"They make you do things that you don't want to do. Like this picture here." (1:30:09 - 1:30:18)

In this scene, the interplay between the visual and auditive elements creates a contrast. Visually, the camera is placed in a high angle (Thompson & Bowen, 2009) and lighting focus intently (Thompson & Bowen, 2009) on her body, particularly highlighting her exposed chest. This visual emphasis serves to objectify her, drawing the viewer's attention to her physical form and subtly reinforcing the way she is commodified by the industry. The strategic use of lighting and camera angle accentuate this objectification, making her body the primary subject of the viewer's gaze.

However, the auditory elements provide a contrasting narrative. As the camera exposes her body, Miss Carrie Foster's dialogue reveals the coercive tactics employed by the Playboy agency. She speaks about the intense pressure to perform acts she does not want to, shedding light on the lack of autonomy she experiences. Her words expose the agency's exploitative practices, painting a picture of an environment where individuals are forced into compromising situations against their will.



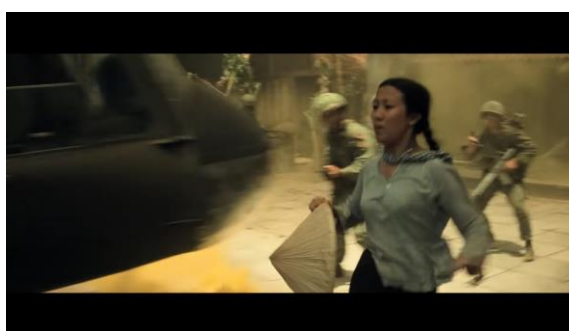


Picture 10. A Medium Shot that highlights Miss Terri Terray's body.

"I love training birds... I really do." (1:30:23 -1:30:32)

Narrative tension is also evident in this particular scene. Visually, the camera and lighting are crafted to focus on Miss Terri Terray's body by utilizing a Medium Shot (Thompson & Bowen, 2009). As the shot is meant to present generic detail about the scene's background (Thompson & Bowen, 2009), the camera captures her posing according to Chef's directions, with a particular emphasis on her exposed chest. The lighting further accentuates this exposure, drawing the audiences' focus and highlighting her physical form in a way that underscores her objectification. This visual portrayal suggests a scenario where Miss Terri Terray is being controlled, and her body is reduced to an object and visual interest.

In contrast, the auditory elements show a different narrative. Through her dialogue, Miss Terri Terray speaks about her passion for training birds and shares her experience working at Busch Garden for two years. Her words reveal a personal history and a sense of individuality that contrasts with the visual portrayal of her not having control over her body. While her physical actions comply with Chef's directions due to their deal, her voice tells a different story.



Picture 11. A Vietnamese woman throws a grenade to an American helicopter.

In this scene, a nameless Vietnamese woman is depicted throwing a grenade towards American helicopter, marking the narrative tension between the visual and auditive elements. Auditively, the woman shouts a few words in Vietnamese, but the film does not provide subtitles

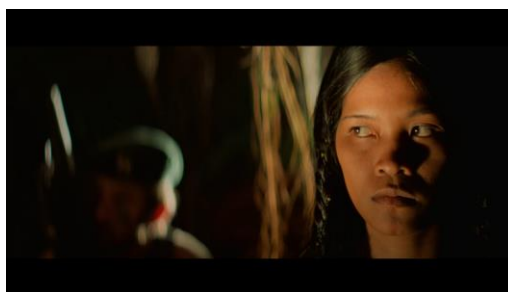


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for her speech. This omission suggests that the film intentionally silences her or does not regard her utterance as an important sound.

Contrastingly, the visual elements of the scene convey a different message. Her blue shirt and conical hat stand out sharply against the military-green background of the soldiers. This visual contrast highlights both her individuality and cultural identity, during a chaotic war zone dominated by American military presence. The interplay between these visual and auditory elements reveals a significant gap in the film's narrative approach.



Picture 12. A Big Close-up shot of Kurtz's Cambodian mistress.

Narrative tension is also evident in this scene, mirroring the tension found in the earlier scene featuring the nameless Vietnamese woman throwing a grenade. In this instance, the woman is also depicted without a name. The audience can only infer that she is likely Kurtz's Cambodian mistress due to her presence within Kurtz's compound and her silent observance of Willard as he prepares to assassinate Kurtz. The lack of explicit identification underscores her marginalization within the narrative. Kurtz's Cambodian mistress experiences a profound lack of auditory autonomy, as she remains silent throughout her appearances in the film. Her continual voicelessness strips her ability to express herself verbally, further reducing her presence and agency within the narrative.

In contrast, the visual elements depict a different narrative. The Big Close-up shot used here not only highlights the emotions of Kurtz's Cambodian mistress but also underscores the significance of her visual presence. Her eyes, fixed on Willard as he prepares to assassinate Kurtz, reveal her awareness of the important events happening around her. Her gaze suggests a deep understanding of the occurrence, positioning her as an observant witness to the critical moment of Willard's mission.

Beyond Silence and Stillness: Women's Resistance

While *Apocalypse Now: Redux* may initially appear to objectify and marginalize the female characters through both its visual and auditive elements, it is possible to also argue that they do not passively accept their subordinate positions. Instead, they actively challenge and resist the subjugation directed towards them through assertive verbal expressions and physical presence. This behavior not only serves their individual agency, but also serves as a bold defiance against the long-established stereotypes of women in war films.



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Narrative tension provides an alternative approach for the female characters in *Apocalypse Now: Redux* to assert their agency. This interplay allows the female characters to subtly yet effectively demonstrate their independence and power, suggesting that beneath the surface of their seemingly marginalized roles, they possess a resilient and defiant spirit.

Voice is one of the most important elements in narratology, as it plays a crucial role in shaping the narrative and guiding the audience's understanding and engagement with the story. Voice encompasses the narrative perspective, the tone, and the style through which the story is conveyed. It is the medium through which characters and events are presented, and it deeply influences how a story is perceived and interpreted (Genette, 1972).

In depicting female agency, voice becomes a particularly powerful vehicle. Female agency refers to the capacity of female characters to act independently, make their own choices, and assert their own identities within a narrative. Through voice, authors and filmmakers can highlight these aspects, giving female characters the space to express their thoughts, feelings, and motivations.

In *Apocalypse Now: Redux*, voice serves as a significant vehicle for female agency, and is particularly evident in the scenes involving Miss Carrie Foster and Miss Terri Terray. These characters, portrayed in **Picture 11.** and **Picture 12.**, are visually objectified through the exposure of their breasts, strategic lighting, and close-up shots. Despite this visual objectification, both Miss Carrie Foster and Miss Terri Terray assert their control and autonomy through their vocal expressions.

Miss Carrie Foster openly critiques the Playboy agency, recounting in detail how it frequently pressures her into participating in activities that left her feeling deeply uncomfortable and violated. She admits that she experiences a sense of self-repulsion when compelled to act against her own wishes. Additionally, she expresses her longing for companionship and desire for someone who can understand and validate her perspective amidst the challenges she faces. By articulating her discomfort and dissatisfaction, she points out the oppressive practices of the agency. Her act also serves as a form of resistance against the objectification that she faces. By refusing to silently comply with expectations that diminish her autonomy, she asserts her own agency and challenges the narrative that perpetuates her objectification.

Similarly, Miss Terri Terray speaks about her passion for training birds while simultaneously being objectified by the film's visual aspects. With genuine enthusiasm, she recounts her experiences nurturing and training birds, reflecting on the deep connections she has forged with these creatures over the year.

Her dialogue shifts the focus from her physical objectification to her personal interests and expertise, reclaiming her narrative. Miss Terray subtly challenges the audience to see her beyond the confines of objectification, inviting them to recognize her depth and complexity as a person. She asserts her right to be valued for more than just her physical attributes. Both Miss Carrie Foster and Miss Terri Terray's dialogues are not just a personal narrative. It also represents acts of defiance against powerful structures that seek to silence and commodify them. The narrative tension in these scenes highlights how their voices serve as potent tools of resistance against the visual exploitation they endure. By articulating their thoughts,



experiences, and discomforts, Miss Carrie Foster and Miss Terri Terray go beyond their objectified depictions, asserting their individuality and autonomy.

While visual aspects in films are often seen as primary contributors to the objectification or marginalization of female characters (Furia & Bielby, 2009), these same elements can also be powerful tools for emphasizing female agency. In her essay, Mulvey (1975) points out how the act of looking, or the gaze, is predominantly male and positions women as objects of visual pleasure. Mulvey (1975) also introduces to-be-looked-at-ness to describe how women are presented as sexual objects designed for visual consumption.

The same visual strategies that have been used to objectify women can also be repurposed to highlight and emphasize female agency. Women can be depicted as empowered individuals with depth and complexity, rather than mere objects of desire. This approach is evident in *Apocalypse Now: Redux*.

In **Picture 11.**, while the Vietnamese woman is audibly silenced, the film employs visual strategies that challenge the conventional male gaze. Rather than objectifying the female body, the framing and composition assert the presence and significance of female characters in the narrative. By depicting the woman in a position of power and control, as she throws the grenade, the film subverts traditional gender dynamics and highlights her pivotal role in the story.

Furthermore, the film's use of lighting and costume design is instrumental in showcasing the strength and independence of female characters. Strong, directional lighting emphasizes their resilience and capability, while practical and powerful costume choices shift the audience's perception, encouraging viewers to see these women as complex and fully realized individuals rather than mere objects of desire. This visual approach underscores the importance of female agency within the film's narrative.

Similarly, Kurtz's Cambodian mistress in **Picture 12.**, is also marginalized through the auditory elements of the film. She is voiceless, with her face being the primary focus on screen. However, the visual strategy employed in this scene offers a more nuanced portrayal. The use of a Big Close-Up shot (Thompson & Bowen, 2009) establishes a deep emotional connection between the character and audience. By focusing on her face, the film captures her subtle expression, which might be missed in wider shots (Thompson & Bowen, 2009). The Big Close-Up shot allows viewers to infer her emotions and thoughts, creating a powerful non-verbal communication that gives her a form of agency despite her lack of dialogue.

The close-up shot does more than just highlight her emotional state, it also serves to humanize her character. By drawing the attention to her expressions, the film allows Kurtz's Cambodian mistress to convey her depth and complexity, presenting her as a fully realized individual rather than a mere object of desire. The intricate play of light and shadow on her face further enhances this effect, emphasizing her presence and significance within the narrative.

5. CONCLUSION

The female characters in *Apocalypse Now* (1979) experience and struggle with objectification and narrative voicelessness as a recurring subject across their separate stories. This problem emerges mostly as a result of the camera angle, lighting technique, costume



design, as well as sound design which sidelines, marginalizes, and reduces their autonomy within the narrative. However, the Redux version (2001), released twenty-two years after the original version, offers insight on the exploration of the female agency through the major new scenes. *Apocalypse Now: Redux* portrays a gap between the visual and auditive narrator, referred to as narrative tension, that allows the female characters to show their authority and control regarding themselves. Through the same narrative devices, the female characters have successfully challenged the patriarchal system and stereotypes assigned to them.

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