

# Another Goddamn Recruiting Film

Problems of “Reality” and their Consequences in  
the Representation of War for Anti-War Purposes

The Example of Stanley Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket



**Yeah it's that awesome**

Illustration posted on: "War movies: Love them or Hate them?" Viewed 21.11.2011. Source:

[http://www.sodahead.com/fun/war-movies-love-them-or-hate-them/question-1664743/?](http://www.sodahead.com/fun/war-movies-love-them-or-hate-them/question-1664743/?link=ibaf&q=full+metal+jacket&imgurl=http://images.sodahead.com/profiles/0/0/1/0/1/0/2/7/9/Full-Metal-Jacket-42410694584.jpeg)

[link=ibaf&q=full+metal+jacket&imgurl=http://images.sodahead.com/profiles/0/0/1/0/1/0/2/7/9/Full-Metal-Jacket-42410694584.jpeg](http://www.sodahead.com/fun/war-movies-love-them-or-hate-them/question-1664743/?link=ibaf&q=full+metal+jacket&imgurl=http://images.sodahead.com/profiles/0/0/1/0/1/0/2/7/9/Full-Metal-Jacket-42410694584.jpeg)

**Uta Beyer**

**December 2011**

***What we see is not made up  
of what we are seeing but  
rather from what we are.***

Fernando Pessoa

## Table of Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2 Some Aspects Regarding the FMJ Audience's "Realities"</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 The Relish for Battle	5
2.2 In the Absence of Real Wars	6
2.3 War is Fun	8
2.4 The Heroes Don't Die	9
2.5 War is Sex	9
<b>3 The Audience's Realities vs. Artistic Ideologies</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>4 Conclusions</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5 Bibliography</b>	<b>13</b>

# 1 Introduction

Stanley Kubrick's film "Full Metal Jacket" (FMJ) boasts a considerable fan-base among war enthusiasts. FMJ online fan-sites<sup>1</sup> are pro- and not anti-war sites. Samuel Fuller, a WWII hero, after watching FMJ, called it, "another goddamn recruiting film"<sup>2</sup>. Gulf-war marine Anthony Swofford says: "Vietnam War films are all pro-war, no matter what the supposed message, what Kubrick or Coppola or Stone intended. . . . The magic brutality of the films celebrate the terrible and despicable beauty of their fighting skills. Fight, rape, war, pillage, burn. Filmic images of death and carnage are pornography for the military man."<sup>3</sup>

Kubrick's intentions to make the film are not clear, in (the few) interviews he mainly gives "a good story" as his main reason.<sup>4</sup> In an interview with the Washington Post, he explains: "I think it tries to give a sense of the war and the people, and how it affected them. I think with any work of art, if I can call it that, that stays around the truth and is effective, it's very hard to write a nice capsule explanation of what it's about."<sup>5</sup>

Considering the immense pro-war fan base, and assuming, positivistically, Kubrick was not a war advocate, and his intention was to create an anti-war film, the question is: Why did Kubrick make this film (the way he did)?

The aim of this essay thus is, to find a possible answer to that question and to address some problems of representing "the reality of war" in a film, taking FMJ as an example. The research will take into account Karl Mannheim's "Ideology and Utopia" (1929), where he asks to what extent our own ideological biases prevent us from understanding social realities. The research questions are:

1. What characterizes the "typical" war film audience's "reality"?
2. How does FMJ link to the audience's "reality"?
3. Where is Kubrick's "reality" located, and why and how does it differ from his audience's "reality"?
4. What are the possibilities for an anti-war film maker to overcome (artistic) "ideologies" and to take the audience's "realities" into account?

---

<sup>1</sup>See for example <http://www.mmudforums.com/index.php?topic=560.0>, <http://borntokill.pink-pistol.net/>.

<sup>2</sup>Rosenbaum, p.70

<sup>3</sup>Cited in Mark Bowden: "The Things They Carried". March 02, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/books/the-things-they-carried.html?pagewanted=3&src=pm>

<sup>4</sup>See for example: <http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/amk/doc/0077.html>

<sup>5</sup>Rose 1987.

## 2 Some Aspects Regarding the FMJ Audience's "Realities"

### 2.1 The Relish for Battle

In Jean-Luc Godard's "Les Carabiniers" two poor farmers, Michelangelo and Ulysses, sign up as soldiers in a current war, after receiving confirmation they will be allowed to fulfil their violent fantasies, to rape, steal, and murder to their hearts' content. Fighting and wars have an appeal with (some, many) men, "some glory, some necessity, some satisfaction"<sup>6</sup>, as Virginia Woolf softly puts it, or, in more masculine words: "Violence, sex and male camaraderie are the big draw for many adolescent men who enlist."<sup>7</sup> Throughout history more than 99 percent of all warriors were male.<sup>8</sup> Historian John Dippel, in his analysis "War and Sex", locates some of the factors why men go to war in men's anxieties about their own masculinity, and their desire to prove manhood.<sup>9</sup> Also photographer Tim Hetherington, who has covered many wars, finds a particular male fascination with war:

Defining your masculinity is part of the process [of war]. You go to the front to prove yourself and you'll be rewarded; ...if there would be a choice between sitting in a refugee camp or being on the front lines and fighting I would be fighting. There's something about me that, hell, I would be fighting. ... My gaze is very particular. War is interesting because it's where killing becomes legalized and if you're not in that zone you're far from the very place where people are killing and being killed.<sup>10</sup>

This particular male fascination with war is usually not thematised by society and media. "Black Hawk Down" author Mark Bowden remarks: "Relish for battle is experienced by many soldiers, even those repelled by the idea of it. It is a truth that we don't like to face about ourselves, or about the young men who bloody their hands for us in this violent world."<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup>Woolf 1938: p.6. Virginia Woolf when asked (by a man) "How in your opinion are we to prevent war?" replies: "For though many instincts are held more or less in common by both sexes, to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's. Law and practice have developed that difference, whether innate or accidental. Scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman's rifle; the vast majority of birds and beasts have been killed by you, not by us; and it is difficult to judge what we do not share. ... How then are we to understand your problem, and if we cannot, how can we answer your question, how to prevent war? ... Obviously there is for you some glory, some necessity, some satisfaction in fighting which we have never felt or enjoyed."

<sup>7</sup>Bowden, Mark (2003): The Things They Carried. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/books/the-things-they-carried.html?src=pm>.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>cf. John V.H. Dippel (2010): War and Sex: A Brief History of Men's Urge for Battle. Amherst: Prometheus Books.

<sup>10</sup>Hetherington 2011. Tim Hetherington was killed while covering the war in Lybia in April this year.

<sup>11</sup>Bowden, Mark (2003): The Things They Carried. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/books/the-things-they-carried.html?src=pm>.

## 2.2 In the Absence of Real Wars

If wars fulfil certain functions in the matrix of “violence, sex and male camaraderie”, can war films address those same desires, fulfil similar functions? Gulf-war marine Anthony Swofford is assertive, especially when it comes to Vietnam War films. “The magic brutality of the films celebrate the terrible and despicable beauty of their fighting skills. Fight, rape, war, pillage, burn. Filmic images of death and carnage are pornography for the military man.”<sup>12</sup> In Florence Royer’s film “PTSD: The Unspeakable Situation”, veteran Mark Meek says:

Getting into the magazines, combat and survival, that sort of thing ... I also remember the Falkland War, when I was a young kid, because you don't understand it, cause you're a young lad, you know, seeing jets go over, seeing soldiers digging in, you know, when you're a young lad, that looks fantastic.<sup>13</sup>

Predictably, the audience of the war and action film genre is predominantly male.<sup>14</sup> Among men’s top 25 films are rather 'typical' war films like *Apocalypse Now*, *Terminator 2*, and *Platoon*, while these cannot be found amongst females’ top films.

As expected and predicted, males and females live in rather different worlds when it comes to movie preferences. These differences play according to gender stereotypes, with men more likely to prefer movies that are action oriented while women prefer relationship, especially romantic relationship, movies. This gender polarization was most dramatic in younger filmgoers with males exhibiting somewhat more gender-stereotypicality than females. ...Finally, gender stereotyped movie preferences are more blatant in men, but only for young men. As men move past 25, they drift away from such gender-based partiality and begin to look more similar to their female counterparts.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to a mainly male audience, most, if not all, war films have male directors, as well as male heroes.<sup>16</sup> Thus, following Susan Sontag<sup>17</sup>, it can be argued that men do not only make war, they also watch - and make - war films.

Photographer Tim Hetherington locates the audience's fascination with war in a nexus of sexuality, death, aggression, and masculinity, and he criticises society's 'failure' to represent this.

---

<sup>12</sup>Cited in Mark Bowden: “The Things They Carried”. March 02, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/books/the-things-they-carried.html?pagewanted=3&src=pm>

<sup>13</sup>Mark Meek in Royer, Florence (2011): PTSD: The Unspeakable Situation. <http://www.lensculture.com/royer-multimedia.html>

<sup>14</sup>cf. Fischhoff 1998. This study of favourite films as a function of gender is used here in the absence of an audience analysis of FMJ audience.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>cf. e.g. “100 greatest war movies” listed with their directors and heroes, [http://www.digitaldreamdoor.com/pages/movie-pages/movie\\_war.html](http://www.digitaldreamdoor.com/pages/movie-pages/movie_war.html), <http://www.filmsite.org/warfilms.html>, <http://movies.msn.com/movies/article.aspx?news=144003>.

<sup>17</sup>Sontag 2003: p.3.

We know that war is a zone of killing just as we know that the bedroom is a place of sleeping but also of sex. We know these are two intimate things, sex and killing, and we're fascinated by them both but we have an inability to allow ourselves to represent them. Interestingly sex is the one that we allow ourselves to represent, and we call that pornography. Killing is something that we don't allow ourselves to represent. It's filtered out even though the photographers are taking the images of killing to the best of their ability, or indeed their desire. But those images are filtered out by the editors and by society itself.<sup>18</sup>

While the (documentary) representation of killing in war is "filtered out" by media and society, it is still available in the fiction genre. Thus, FMJ and similar films allow a representation of that killing, of violence, of a 'de-civilised' masculinity, that is missed in media coverage, but demanded by an audience. In this regard, FMJ closes a gap in the representation of war, on the thin line between two socially unaccepted items: An audience's desire to see violence, as realistically as possible, and the unmasked, unfiltered images of violence and killing.

Contrary to some film-critics' positive analyses about FMJ's merits as an anti-war film and its symbolic values,<sup>19</sup> Kubrick has produced a successful war film, deeply rooted in the "reality of war". The Los Angeles Times depicts the film as a "report filed from the front"<sup>20</sup>, the Times Union characterizes it as "a movie about soldiering and becoming a soldier. It may be the best and most honest ever made about that subject."<sup>21</sup> In an interview in the San Francisco Chronicle, FMJ drill instructor and former real-life Marine drill instructor Lee Ermy, states that "... nobody's going to convince me Kubrick hasn't made a great war movie, and an accurate one. If I thought there was a hint of bullshit that was against the war in Vietnam, if I'd thought he was making an antiwar film, I would've had nothing to do with the thing. ... Kubrick was very interested in accuracy. He told me that he wanted to make a movie that was as close to being a documentary as possible."<sup>22</sup>

FMJ evidently functions as a "realistic" representation of war, the more realistic, the better. On the search for "defining masculinity" (Hetherington), "some glory, some necessity, some satisfaction in fighting" (Woolf), some "magic brutality" (Swofford), for "violence and sex" (Bowden), and in the absence of "real"/documentary war pictures and films, as well as the absence of real war, FMJ and similar "realistic" war films can function as (legal and socially accepted) surrogate for real war.

---

<sup>18</sup>Hetherington 2011.

<sup>19</sup>See for example: <http://kubrickfilms.tripod.com/id6.html>, <http://www.longpauses.com/blog/2002/12/full-metal-jacket-1987.html>, <http://www.visual-memory.co.uk/amk/doc/0104.html>

<sup>20</sup>Cited after Spiller 2011.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Cited after Felker 1988.

## 2.3 War is Fun

With his films Kubrick, after all, wants to entertain. “At least you're not bored. I don't know if you go to the movies a lot, but that's one of the biggest problems.”<sup>23</sup> The FMJ play list comprises U.S. pop culture hits like “Surfin Bird” and “These Boots are Made for Walkin’”, the soldiers sing the Mickey Mouse Club Song, Private Pyle is, childishly, hiding his jelly doughnut, and a pink Bugs Bunny sits in the ruins of Hue: FMJ, to a large extent, is pure entertainment, all the more for a (juvenile male) audience, that celebrates the “beauty of fighting skills”<sup>24</sup>. The film has inspired dozens of war video games<sup>25</sup>, Vietnam War toy soldiers are on sale<sup>26</sup>, FMJ fan websites operate with names like borntokill.pink-pistol.net and a “Full Metal Jacket” search on Youtube in November 2011 shows 23,900 results (169,000 for “Vietnam War”). The Vietnam War became a steady item in U.S./Western pop culture, and vice versa Stanley Kubrick incorporates pop culture elements into his film.<sup>27</sup>



**Playing War**

Still from the video game “Army of Two”, a scene with voiceover invoking Full Metal Jacket's Sergeant Hartman. Release Date: 2008. Source: [http://www.gameandplayer.net/articles/2008/03/army\\_of\\_two.html](http://www.gameandplayer.net/articles/2008/03/army_of_two.html)

Incorporating “all things fun”, pop songs, Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, doughnuts, all popular, familiar, well-known fun items for the audience, fun that “feels good”, guarantees, that this fun is part of a “reality” of the audience's lives and fulfils certain desires, desires of safe, familiar, 'home couch entertainment' (after all, the audience is still young) – besides, the exact opposite of the tough reality of war. Kubrick's message is simple and it runs: War is fun.

<sup>23</sup>Rose 1987.

<sup>24</sup>Cited in Mark Bowden: “The Things They Carried”. March 02, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/books/the-things-they-carried.html?pagewanted=3&src=pm>

<sup>25</sup>cf. e.g. <http://www.amazon.com/s?ie=UTF8&keywords=Vietnam%20War&rh=n%3A468642%2Ck%3AVietnam%20War&page=1>, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Vietnam\\_War\\_video\\_games](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Vietnam_War_video_games).

<sup>26</sup>cf. e.g. <http://www.toysoldiers.ca/c378101939.2.html>, <http://www.hobbybunker.com/products/figarti-19/mfg/557>.

<sup>27</sup>cf. “The Vietnam War and American Culture” ([http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article\\_display.cfm?HHID=512](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/database/article_display.cfm?HHID=512)), “Where the war goes on and on...” (<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,316754,00.html>),

## 2.4 The Heroes Don't Die

In the eyes of a war-affine audience, that enjoys FMJ's entertainment values, and that identifies with the film's characters, the heroes' deaths would be counter-productive, and give the plot a disappointing, depressing, unexpected, "anti-war" turn, that does not match the "reality" of the audience. When the heroes die, all the fun is annihilated.

In FMJ's war sequence, the second part of the film, none of the film's heroes, that the audience was introduced to in the first part of the film, dies.<sup>28</sup> In order to become an anti-war film, the "reality of war" will have to include death in war, not only of the enemy and anti-hero, but also of the heroes, the characters that the audience identifies with.<sup>29</sup> Why Kubrick has decided to not apply this basic ingredient of an anti-war film, no one will ever know - except for perhaps the Hollywood money machine.

Secondly, and apart from the fact, that dead heroes do not sell well, "immortal" heroes also allow the audience, in the sense of Foucault<sup>30</sup>, to remain in and strengthen their own stereotypes, prejudices, and discourse, and indeed, define masculinity. In FMJ's closing scene, while the marines march through the burning ruins of Hue and sing the Mickey Mouse Song, Private Joker summarizes:

My thoughts drift back to erect-nipple wet dreams about Mary Jane Rottencrotch and the great homecoming fuck fantasy. I am so happy, that I am alive, in one piece, and short. I'm in a world of shit, yes. But I am alive. And I am not afraid.

An audience not only seeks masculinity, excitement, and realistic photography – it also, via the hero, wants to be and stay alive.

## 2.5 War is Sex

FMJ represents a/the world of white young Western man, whether as hero or anti-hero, of his culture and desires. Other men and women only appear marginally, with the exception of Vietnamese women: They play a role three times, twice as prostitutes serving American soldiers, and one time as sniper (that gets killed by Private Joker) – in the sense of Said<sup>31</sup> a process of "Othering", with the effect of strengthening the audience's discourse.

---

<sup>28</sup>Only two main characters die, Private Pyle and Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, but they die in the boot camp, not in the war. Real heroes, in the best case, survive the war, or, in the worst case, die in war - but they do not die in a boot camp.

<sup>29</sup>Probably one of the reasons why Erich Maria Remarque's "All Quiet on the Western Front" counts as one of the few true anti-war narratives (as book or film) ever produced, is that all heroes die, except for one (c.f. <http://www.amazon.com/Quiet-Western-Front-Erich-Remarque/dp/0449213943>, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0020629/>).

<sup>30</sup>c.f. Foucault, Michel (1972): L'ordre du discours. Paris: Gallimard.

<sup>31</sup>c.f. Said, Edward W. (1978): Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books.

The white, male world that Kubrick stages, is a world of violence and male sexuality. In the boot camp the rifle is being transformed into a female object. “You are married to this weapon”, yells Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, the recruits have to give their rifles a female name and go to bed with it. “This is my rifle, this is my gun, this is for fighting, this is for fun” is a piece of poetry the recruits have to recite, while holding their rifles in one hand, and their genitals in the other. At the same time (in the boot camp) the recruits are being transformed into weapons themselves, “You will be weapon, a minister of death, a praying for war”, runs another of Hartman's announcements. The boot camp phase is steeped in Hartman's tirades and insults, that are almost always of a sexual or obscene contents.

While this amalgam of sexuality and violence can be read as an anti-war statement, it is, on the contrary, likely to be an attractive pro-war feature for an audience seeking the visuals of war, violence, sexuality, aggression, and masculinity.



**This is for fighting, this is for fun**

Text and scene from Full Metal Jacket. Photo: Ronald Grant Archive. Source: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2010/jun/24/full-metal-jacket-stanley-kubrick>

Due to the scope of the essay at hand, the findings in this chapter can just offer a brief glimpse into the audience's “reality” and need to be analysed more in depth. When summarizing the above mix of a (male juvenile) audience's desire to “make war”, or (in the absence of it) to watch war and war violence as realistically as possible, as well as to be entertained, it becomes plausible, why Fuller<sup>32</sup> calls FMJ “another goddamn recruiting film”. The film fulfils the visual desires of an audience regarding (male) sexuality, death, aggression, violence, and masculinity, and is, on top of this, highly entertaining, desires that are not usually addressed in the documentary visuals of war.

While the above connexions might be immediately intelligible to the readership here, they were apparently concealed to Kubrick himself. Often cited when it comes to the “impossibility” of making anti-war films is François Truffaut's statement, that there is no such thing as an anti-war movie because it will invariably look exciting on screen.<sup>33</sup> As

<sup>32</sup>In: Rosenbaum, p.70

<sup>33</sup>cf. e.g. <http://www.topix.com/who/francois-truffaut>, [http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2004/07/04/allied\\_forces/](http://www.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2004/07/04/allied_forces/)

shown in this chapter, “exciting” is exactly what Kubrick has produced, a war film, a “recruiting film”, and my question is: Why?<sup>34</sup>

### 3 The Audience's Realities vs. Artistic Ideologies

In a positivistic approach it is assumed here, that Kubrick intended to make an anti-war film, or even an anti-“war film”-film. Kubrick himself is not very informative when it comes to the reasons why he made the film, and usually avoids the question. One of his most explanatory answers in that regard is his statement in an interview with the Washington Post, where he says: “I think it tries to give a sense of the war and the people, and how it affected them. I think with any work of art, if I can call it that, that stays around the truth and is effective, it's very hard to write a nice capsule explanation of what it's about”.<sup>35</sup>

On the basis of the previous chapter's findings and assuming Kubrick had intended to produce a piece of anti-war art film, it becomes apparent, that Kubrick has worked past his audience and their realities. In an attempt to explain why the “realities” of Kubrick and his audience diverge so drastically, Karl Mannheim's “Ideology and Utopia”<sup>36</sup> is utilized here.

In “Ideology and Utopia” Mannheim investigates how we perceive and interpret the world. Mannheim assumes that we do not only perceive the world according to the facts of the world and of our minds, but we see the world through a specific lens, we interpret the world, according to factors of our social existence, like culture, interests, and socialisation. Mannheim's theory is rooted in the sociology of knowledge, thus, according to Mannheim, all knowledge is bound to our social existence. Historical and social processes and structures influence our knowledge. Different social groups develop specific motives and power interests depending on their societal location, which eventually form the thought structures and world views (Weltanschauung) of the group. Such thought structures determine, how something is perceived, and how this perception can be transferred into a knowledge framework. Therefore, every thinking is 'ideological', because different interpretations of existence result in different ideologies.<sup>37</sup> Mannheim calls this kind of ideologies “total ideologies”, as opposed to “particular ideologies” (“statements, that ... owe their falsity ... to a willing or unwilling, deliberate, semi-deliberate or undeliberate delusion, .... that must be labeled as masking, falsification or as lie”<sup>38</sup>). As a result of the total ideologies, of “every thinking being ideological”, we are ultimately unable to, thinkingly, conceive the reality of society.

Mannheim is convinced, that ideological thinking can be overcome by the sociology of knowledge. If the societal existence and position forms our thinking, then influencing this

---

<sup>34</sup>The answer might of course be banal: Young men make war, old men make war films - a way to prove masculinity for the older generation? (Kubrick was 59 in 1987.) A curious and affirmative interest in the “Magic of War” is certainly necessary for making wars as well as war films.

<sup>35</sup>Rose 1987.

<sup>36</sup>Mannheim 1929 (the German language version “Ideologie und Utopie”).

<sup>37</sup>cf. [http://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls\\_uploads/pdfs/197Heyer.pdf](http://www.rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/197Heyer.pdf); [http://de.wikibooks.org/wiki/Soziologische\\_Klassiker/\\_Mannheim,\\_Karl](http://de.wikibooks.org/wiki/Soziologische_Klassiker/_Mannheim,_Karl); [http://www.soziologie.uni-halle.de/kreckel/lehre/ss04\\_zeitgeschichte\\_g04.pdf](http://www.soziologie.uni-halle.de/kreckel/lehre/ss04_zeitgeschichte_g04.pdf)

<sup>38</sup>cf. Mannheim 1929: p. 228.

societal position is necessary to redress the ideologies. Intellectuals in particular, according to Mannheim, are suitable for this process, as due to their profound knowledge they are able to recognize relations between different forms of knowledge and ideologies.

Which relevance does Mannheim's theory have regarding Stanley Kubrick and FMJ? As a successful American film director Kubrick belongs to a specific societal group, that is grounded on specific motives and interests, and that holds an own ideological world view with its own interpretation of "reality". Kubrick regards FMJ as a "work of art...that stays around the truth"<sup>39</sup>. It can be concluded, that Kubrick's "ideological" world view regarding his audience is that of a sophisticated, critical, open-minded audience, that is anti-war, that appreciates the film's aesthetic photography, shows sensitivity towards art, symbols, allegories, and metaphors, in short, an audience that thinks like him. It may never have occurred to him, that there is an audience "out there", that is pro-war and pro-violence, that enjoys the action, the dialogues, Hartman's drill and the pop songs, that thinks Private Pyle is a loser, that identifies with Private Joker or (even) Gunnery Sergeant Hartman, in brief, an audience that enjoys the realism of the film, because it is so close to real war.

According to Mannheim, Kubrick is unable to conceive the reality of his audience, as he is caught in his own ideological world view. Kubrick's "reality" thus dashes against the "reality" of an audience, who thinks within their own total ideology as well.

A solution to the dilemma, according to Mannheim, can only be found on a societal level, through influencing the societal position of the respective group, for which he regards intellectuals as predestined. A compilation of connections and synergies, and a mediation between the different societal groups and their "realities" is the only solution.

## 4 Conclusions

Whether an anti-war film is an anti-war film or a war film, is in the eye of the beholder. The audience's subjective perspective, or: "reality", is influenced by numerous factors like culture, interests, political attitudes, ideologies, socialisation, gender, prejudices, and these factors define how the audience interprets a film. This process lies beyond the director's/photographer's sphere of influence.

Especially when it comes to the representation of war, the ideological worlds and "realities" of an (art-/anti-war) film director and an audience are likely to be not congruent. Following Clausewitz one could say: "War films are just a continuation of war with other means".<sup>40</sup> The prospects of an anti-war film to really become an anti-war film are very limited, and if the director's intention is to show "the reality", then even better for an audience that seeks to get as close as possible to real war. The film then serves as surrogate for war, in the eyes of the wanna-be marine. Kubrick is caught in Hasford's<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup>cf. Rose 1987.

<sup>40</sup>Clausewitz stated that "War is just a continuation of politics with other means". c.f. Carl von Clausewitz, Vom Kriege, <http://www.werhatdasgesagt.de/politik-zitate/carl-von-clausewitz-zitate/vom-kriege/der-krieg-ist-eine-blosse-fortsetzung-der-politik-mit-anderen-mitteln/>

<sup>41</sup>Gustav Hasford, a Vietnam veteran, whose first novel, "The Short-Timers", was the basis for Stanley Kubrick's Full

“realistic” boot camp and war description and clings to the action genre with a “realistic” representation of war. Self-reflexivity, as an art film tool, is likely to be difficult to combine with the (mass) action film genre. In order to make an anti-war film, one has to make a war film – a tautology that can hardly be escaped.

According to Wim Wenders, “the most political decision you make is where you direct people’s eyes”<sup>42</sup>. Every photo, every film, every photo story, every visual narrative is political, it is, to speak with Mannheim, ideological, an ideological statement, or message, and it must be understood like that by the producers (directors, photographers). From this it follows that no single visual narrative ever is “innocent” or neutral, it always requires and challenges the producer's sense of *responsibility*.

Kubrick and FMJ is an example of a film director, who has lost the grip on the reality of his audience. It is an example of a “forgotten” audience, and the (sometimes forgotten) fact that films, photos, narratives not only have *some* but *a certain* effect and impact on their audience. What can be learned from FMJ is, that film directors (photographers, artists) do well to deeply analyze and understand their audience. If art is not for art's sake (and to please the artist only), the reality of art invariably ends, where the audience's reality begins.

## 5 Bibliography

Felker, Mike (1988): Platoon. Full Metal Jacket. Back to Vietnam. *Jump Cut*, no. 33, Feb. 1988, pp. 28-30.

Fischhoff, Stuart et al. (1998): Favorite Films and Film Genres As A Function of Race, Age, and Gender. *Journal of Media Psychology*, Volume 3, Number 1, Winter, 1998. Viewed 20.11.2011. <http://www.calstatela.edu/faculty/sfisco/media3.html>

Goldstein, Joshua S. (2001): War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, viewed 19.11.2011, <http://www.warandgender.com/wgch1.htm>.

Hetherington, Tim and Stephen Mayes (2011): The Theatre of War, or 'La Petite Mort'. Published at [www.david-campbell.org](http://www.david-campbell.org), 5 September 2011. Viewed 20 September 2011. [http://www.david-campbell.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Mayes\\_Hetherington\\_The\\_Theatre\\_of\\_War\\_2011.pdf](http://www.david-campbell.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Mayes_Hetherington_The_Theatre_of_War_2011.pdf)

Mannheim, Karl (1929): *Ideologie und Utopie*. Bonn: Cohen.

Marcuse, Herbert (1929): Zur Wahrheitsproblematik der soziologischen Methode. In: *Die Gesellschaft. Internationale Revue für Sozialismus und Politik* 5, pp. 356-369.

---

Metal Jacket.

<sup>42</sup>Wim Wenders: *The Act of Seeing* (Faber and Faber, London, 1997) in David Levis Strauss: *Between The Eyes, Essays on photography and politics*. (Aperture Foundation, New York, 2003) p.1.

Rose, Lloyd (1987): Stanley Kubrick, at a Distance. Washington Post, Sunday, 28 June 1987. Viewed 5 November 2011. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/movies/features/kubrick1987.htm>.

Rosenbaum, Jonathan (2002): Movie Wars. London: Wallflower Press.

Sontag, Susan (2003): Regarding the Pain of Others. New York: Picador.

Spiller, James (2011): Viet Nam Elective. University of the Arts London, MA Documentary Film 2011.

Woolf, Virginia (1938): Three Guineas. Viewed 19.11.2011. Available online at: [http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/BPL/Images/Content\\_store/Sample\\_chapter/9780631177241/woolf.pdf](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/BPL/Images/Content_store/Sample_chapter/9780631177241/woolf.pdf)