

GROUND-BREAKING EXPRESSIVE STRATEGIES IN THE WAR FILMS OF CLASSICAL REALISM

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War is a magnet for the box office. It is the ultimate dramatic conflict, where the hero kills or is killed in the name of an ideal. It is also the setting for a great spectacle. The battle scene is experienced as a *simulacrum*¹ of a great historic moment. The spectator is subjected to the intensity of a sequence filled with dramatic, emotionally overwhelming audiovisual stimuli, which constitute “the replacement of reality with a montage of signs designed to resemble reality” (Klien, 2005: 437).

The battle scene, in a genre like the war film, which tends to engage in a little propaganda (Langford, 2005), is also of crucial importance as an ideological catalyst. In many cases it operates, like songs in the musical genre (Allison, 2010: 93), as an interruption in which the plot development is momentarily suspended in the interests of offering an audiovisual attraction, defined by Eisenstein in 1924 as a fragment “that is known and proven to exercise a definite effect on the attention

and emotions of the audience and that, combined with others, possesses the characteristic of concentrating the audience’s emotions in any direction dictated by the production’s purpose” (Taylor, 2010: 40-41). The intensity of this aesthetic experience subjects the spectator to “certain emotional shocks which, when combined, in themselves condition the possibility of perceiving the ideological aspect of the spectacle presented, its final ideological conclusion” (Sánchez-Biosca, 1996: 106-107). In short, the impression caused by the battle scene “invites the audience to empathize with the dominant values reified in the spectacle and discourages critical public discourse” (Klien, 2005: 428).

The contemporary battle scene assaults its audience through a hyperrealist treatment that turns the spectator into an “inhabitant of the image” (Stam, 2001: 362). Film viewers want the action sequence to “hit [them] between the eyes” or “knock [them] out of [their] seat” (Barker & Brooks,

quoted in King, 2009: 98). The battle scenes in *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998) set the parameters for this hyperrealist aesthetic model of the contemporary war film (Biesecker, 2002). From the moment of the landing at Omaha Beach, the cinematic war experience has to be immersive: it must place the spectator on the battlefield. The recent success of *Dunkirk* (Christopher Nolan, 2017) is attributed precisely to its use of the war scene “in service of a kind of heightened reality, one that feels more immersive and immediate than whatever concerns we check at the door when entering the cinema” (Debruge, 2017). The relationship to the Spielberg model is obvious, as the critic for *Variety* also points out: “Steven Spielberg laid claim to the Normandy beach landing, Clint Eastwood owns Iwo Jima, and now, Christopher Nolan has authored the definitive cinematic version of *Dunkirk*” (Debruge, 2017). The film also serves as a paradigm for the definition of realism in *Hacksaw Ridge* (Mel Gibson, 2016): “Gibson captures the most brutal and bloody screen carnage since his own *Braveheart* and the opening sequence of Steven Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan*” (Travers, 2016). *Saving Private Ryan*, twenty years after its release, remains the standard for film depictions of combat today.

But every innovation has its influences. The key to the appeal of Spielberg’s battle scenes is a camera that “acts on behalf of us, ‘motivated’ as if by our desired presence” (Sutton, 2004: 383), a clear heir to the documentary films produced during the war itself. Indeed, Spielberg’s Omaha Beach evokes the camera work in documentaries filmed on the real battlefields of the Second World War,² like *The Battle of Midway* (John Ford, 1942) or *The Battle of San Pietro* (John Huston, 1945). His Omaha Beach also turns back to the tradition “from Eisenstein to Peckinpah of directors who see editing as the real art of directing” (Dancyger, 2007: 192), abandoning classical continuity for the use of juxtaposition (Monte-ro-Díaz & Fernández-Ramírez, 2015) and “fast

and fragmentary editing and spatial discontinuity” (Walker, quoted in Pérez, 2012: 811). Although the Spielberg battle scene rejects the lack of honesty of previous films of the genre (Basinger, 1998), its audiovisual style, also a model for the latest war films, is the result of the evolution of techniques that were already being used in Hollywood’s classical period after the Second World War.

SPIELBERG’S OMAHA BEACH EVOKES THE CAMERA WORK IN DOCUMENTARIES FILMED ON THE REAL BATTLEFIELDS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, LIKE THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY OR THE BATTLE OF SAN PIETRO

The great battle scenes of those days, despite the self-censorship imposed insofar as the depiction of violence was concerned, found audiovisual modes that were realistic to a spectator who in the 1940s had seen the *real* war in newsreels, documentaries or, in the worst cases, on the battlefield itself. In combat scenes “instead of classical Hollywood realism, the form of authenticity most at work is [...] corporeal realism, focusing on the perceptual and sensual experience of the spectator who is immersed in the action onscreen” (Allison, 2010: 9). Far from unsettling an audience accustomed to naturalist cinematography that gave a privileged place to omnipresent observation and editing that sought to cover over any perception of fragmentation, the sub-genre of the classical combat film aimed to expose the enunciation by incorporating documentary and Soviet montage techniques into their battle sequences. It is thus hardly surprising that Ralph Winter, the editor of the legendary chariot sequence in *Ben Hur* (William Wyler, 1959), would suggest that “there are no rules for action sequences [...] if it’s done with rhythm and for a reason, the audience won’t feel

uncomfortable with any kind of editing" (McGrath, 2001: 19).

This article will identify the ground-breaking cinematography and editing strategies that shaped the classical Hollywood combat film and laid the foundations for the hyperrealism of the war films of today.

STATE OF THE QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

The war movie and the sub-genre of classical combat films have been the subject of numerous studies using narrative analysis (Basinger, 1986; Schatz, 1998; Langford, 2005; Muruzábal, 2007), as well as research assessing the historical veracity of their content (Suid, 2002; Rosenstone, 2006) or the politico-military implications of their production (Valantin, 2003). However, very few studies have analysed the form of their discourse (Bender, 2013), and fewer still how they break with the stylistic formula adopted by the major Hollywood studios (Allison, 2010).

This study begins with an analysis of the battle scenes in the documentaries *The Battle of Midway* and *The Battle of San Pietro*, as I consider these two films to have defined the strategies used in the battle scenes produced afterwards that broke with classical stylistic conventions (Allison, 2010: 45). This is followed by an examination of a sample of classical combat films that have been selected on the basis of their release dates (after the dates that Ford's and Huston's documentaries were released), the artistic significance of the film's director, and the degree to which the film has been considered *realist* in monographs on war films (Basinger, 1986; Muruzábal, 2007) or film history (Cook, 1996).

For this analysis, battle scenes from the following films have been chosen: *Destination Tokyo* (Delmer Daves, 1943), *Battleground* (William Wellman, 1949), *Sands of Iwo Jima* (Allan Dwan, 1949), *The Steel Helmet* (Samuel Fuller, 1951), *The Desert*

Fox: The Story of Rommel (Henry Hathaway, 1951), *From Here to Eternity* (Fred Zinnemann, 1953), *Fear and Desire* (Stanley Kubrick, 1953), *Paths of Glory* (Stanley Kubrick, 1957), *The Longest Day* (Ken Annakin, Andrew Marton & Bernhard Wicki, 1962), *Patton* (Franklin Schaffner, 1970) and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (Richard Fleischer, Kinji Fukasaku & Toshio Masuda, 1970). The films *Objective, Burma!* (Raoul Walsh, 1945) and *Pork Chop Hill* (Lewis Milestone, 1959) were also analysed in this research, but they are not included in this study because, unlike the other films in the sample, their battle scenes adhere to all the classical conventions.

The analysis of these films is based on a descriptive approach that draws on the method used by Sergei Eisenstein in 1934 to explain his own work to his detractors (Taylor, 2010: 293). It is a qualitative approach that compares the graphic, sound and rhythmic schemes used in consecutive shots or segments and takes note only of the differences between them. In the manner that it is proposed here, this dialectical reading emulates the way the spectator involuntarily interprets a succession of shots to make sense of what is happening in them. In the stylistic changes and contrasts of a scene, the audience also recognises a poetic intention that aims to excite, emphasise or comment on a theme (Fernández-Ramírez, 2014: 34-53). From this analytical perspective, a dialectic microanalysis has been conducted (Fernández-Ramírez, 2014: 139-141) to establish a detailed definition of the audiovisual techniques used in the battle sequences in each film. The questions considered include the size, perspective, compo-

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sition, angle, depth of field, optics, movement and duration of the shots, as well as the use of sound. The number of cuts per minute in the scene or in stylistically differentiated segments³ has also been calculated in order to define the average duration of the shots, partly based on the quantitative method of editing analysis proposed by Barry Salt (1974). This was followed by grouping of the stylistic techniques that were found to be the most common in the battle scenes of these films.⁴

CLASSICAL ENUNCIATION FOCUSED ON PRESENTING “AN APPARENTLY SOLID FICTIONAL WORLD WHICH HAS SIMPLY BEEN FILMED FOR OUR BENEFIT.” IT AIMED AT PREVENTING THE PERCEPTION OF FRAGMENTATION IN ORDER TO RENDER THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC DEVICE INVISIBLE

To identify the ground-breaking cinematographic and editing strategies used in the battle sequences chosen, the results of the dialectical analysis were compared against the cinematographic and editing strategies of the classical formula as described by Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson (1985), Edward Dmytryk (1986) and Karel Reisz (1980). The assembly line production system of the major Hollywood studios required the application of a stylistic standard which, through its repeated use in hundreds of productions, came to define cinematic naturalism. This avoided the stylisation that characterised the silent period and the visibility of fragmentation, as it was considered that symbolism and juxtaposition “slowed down” the film and represented “an unnecessary obstacle” to spectator comprehension (Reisz, 1980: 61). Plot clarity, emotional emphasis and the prevalence of the illusion of reality determined the cinematographic and editing style. Classical enunciation focused on presenting “an

apparently solid fictional world which has simply been filmed for our benefit” (Bordwell, Staiger & Thompson, 1985: 23). It aimed at preventing the perception of fragmentation in order to render the cinematographic device invisible. To this end, techniques were applied like cutting on action, filming around an axis of action, 30-degree changes of perspective between consecutive shots within the presentation of the same dramatic action, slow and fluid movements, the progressive reduction of shot sizes after an initial establishment shot, and the repetition of a small number of camera positions to construct the scene. The spectator was given an omnipresent position that would facilitate unmediated observation of the scene. Only the dialogue, music and shot sizes offered a guide for the interpretation of what was happening on the screen. The enunciation would offer no commentary whatsoever; on the contrary, it had to be invisible to the spectator. The clarity of the spatial location of the action and the continued chronological flow were essential; in this way, spectators could equate the fragmented presentation of a film with their way of viewing reality, as they did not perceive the frame changes and could concentrate on the content of the story presented in the frames (which had to be composed according to the rule of thirds to facilitate their comprehension). In the classical system of representation, cinematography and editing were placed “at the service of the performer” (Reisz, 1980: 57), as the actor’s movements or emotions were what determined the duration of a frame. The *tempo* of a sequence was therefore dictated by the *mise-en-scene* (with an average shot duration of 8 to 12 seconds), which tended to make the pace seem slow (Bordwell, 2006: 154).

Having compared the techniques common to the films chosen for this analysis with those normally used in the classical sequence, I will now turn to a definition of the taxonomy of ground-breaking expressive strategies in the war films of classical realism.

I SURVIVED THE BATTLES OF MIDWAY AND SAN PIETRO

The *Washington Post* described *The Battle of Midway* as “the beginning of a new epoch in war pictures” (Allison, 2010: 48). The *New York Times* asserted that “for eighteen tingling and harshly realistic minutes the spectator is plunged into the frontline amid the thunder of exploding bombs” and that there was “no faking here; this is the real thing” (Allison, 2010: 49).

Structurally, this film combines two types of sequences: expository sequences (in which a narrator’s voice presents life on Midway before and after the battle, or the men who fought and died in combat) and sequences that depict the battle that took place on the island against Japan’s aerial forces. The whole film has a high level of fragmentation, as juxtaposition is used as a basic editing technique. The music and the narrator’s voice give continuity to the picture, except in the battle scenes. The descriptive moments are presented using dissolves between wide shots and smooth, fluid pans; the heroes are presented by juxtaposing matching close-up shots.

The contrast with the design of the battle scenes is huge. In these sequences, the fragmentation is even more visible, firstly, because the music and the narration disappear to give way to direct synchronous sound with juxtaposed images. This underscores the heterogeneity of sound and image and makes the moment of the cut obvious. Moreover, gunfire and explosions coincide with the change of shot and visually the explosions are magnified through their presentation from different perspectives (air, water, ground). These changes of perspective disorient the spectator, something quite out of keeping with classical cinema. The invisible fragmentation and enunciation of classical cinema are blown to smithereens in *The Battle of Midway*. In its battle scenes there is no repetition of frames, which in a naturalist discourse would allow the spectator to make

sense of the scene calmly. Instead, these battle scenes operate on the opposite idea: to hinder a relaxed reading, given that the situation depicted is itself anything but relaxed. We are therefore presented with flawed shots (sometimes with too much “air” in the upper part of the frame, or with a slanted horizon, when the cameraman takes cover instinctively in reaction to nearby gunfire or bombing) and a strikingly accelerated *tempo*, with the average shot duration dropping from 5 to 2 seconds. Their rapid pace, the juxtaposition of shots with flaws or that betray the presence of the source of the point of view (nearly always showing elements in the foreground that serve to hide us from the gunfire or explosions) seem to be intended to reproduce the experience of a soldier overwhelmed by the frenetic activity on the battlefield. To achieve this, in many frames the weapon or figure of a sniper is presented in the foreground.

But *The Battle of Midway* is not content merely to offer the spectator a vicarious experience; it also aims to make its images look authentic. To this end, it invites the spectator to identify with the camera operator, whose work and presence in the scene is exposed by including glare from the sun’s rays or shaking caused by the gunfire and explosions of the combat. The film even pops out of its compartment in the camera at one point due to the impact of a nearby explosion. These techniques emphasise the fact that Ford’s cameraman *was there* and that the footage reflects *reality* for the spectator in 1942. If the image is false because we see reality in mediated form rather than directly, it is only at the perceptual level, given that on the one hand we know that “it is not

THE INVISIBLE FRAGMENTATION AND ENUNCIATION OF CLASSICAL CINEMA ARE BLOWN TO SMITHEREENS IN THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY

there”, and on the other, “but it has indeed been” (Barthes, 2009: 172). The perception of the filmic construction, its procedure and apparatus for taking pictures, instead of exposing the cinematographic device, constitute a guarantee of authenticity.

John Huston recognised the value of these techniques so contrary to classical naturalism for shaping the new realism of the war film, and he included and developed them in *The Battle of San Pietro*. In this documentary the presentational style of the battle scenes contrasts sharply with that of the explanatory sequences that contextualise them (about military strategy or the features of the terrain) and of the more poetic scenes (the conclusion juxtaposes happy elderly people, women and children after the victory, and after each battle scene we are presented with a juxtaposition of the dead and wounded in the battle). The combat sequences have a faster *tempo* than the other sequences (1.5 seconds compared to the 4.5-second average in the film as a whole), an even faster pace than that used in *The Battle of Midway*. Huston went even further to highlight the fragmentation of the battles by including sudden changes to the axis of action between successive shots and a very high number of perspectives on a single situation. He also emphasised the presence of the cameraman and of the soldier, increasing both the magnitude and the frequency of shaking and sweeping in frames during bombings, presenting more shots with objects out of focus in the foreground, to emphasise their position on the ground, and more shots foregrounding a sniper and his gun. The fact that this documentary was made using footage taken either before or after the actual battle (re-enactments) means that Huston consciously chose to use these techniques and they were not merely due to the immediacy of footage taken in actual combat. Such techniques had been established as expected elements of war film realism.

GROUND-BREAKING STRATEGIES FOR REALISTIC BATTLE SCENES

Contrary to the stylistic homogeneity of classical cinema, most of the battle scenes in the films analysed combine fictional action shots with real documentary footage taken during the war. Far from being unsettled by the different sources of this blended material (fictional and documentary), the audience considers that the inclusion of real footage lends legitimacy and historic authenticity to the battle presented. *Destination Tokyo* combines documentary footage with models to reproduce the air strike (Image 1) and the impact of the torpedoes on the Japanese ships. *Battle-ground* also uses documentary footage to depict airdrops of provisions and the air strike on the enemy at the end of the film. *From Here to Eternity* uses excerpts from documentaries to represent the air attack and sinking of ships in Pearl Harbor, while *The Steel Helmet* uses them at the end of the film to show alternate shots of a bombing in a place away from the protagonists’ main location. Documentary footage had become so iconic for audiences that in *The Longest Day* a view from behind of the soldiers disembarking from the landing craft at Omaha Beach was re-created

Image 1. The documentary shots present flawed compositions with a slanted horizon, like this one in *Destination Tokyo*



with actors⁵ (Image 2). But the films in which the use of actual documentary footage was of greatest importance were *Sands of Iwo Jima* and *The Desert Fox*. In the first of these films, the battles are reconstructed in fragments juxtaposing documentary footage and fictional re-enactments of the action. The results of this combination are extremely uneven, as the two different types of footage are easily distinguishable. The difference is clear due to the film quality of each type of footage and a marked contrast in the style. The re-enacted scenes look static and slow compared to the documentary footage, which has an extremely fast pace because of the variety of positions and perspectives from which the battles in the Pacific were filmed, the brief shots, the rough, shaky camera movements and the improvised compositions, all due to the intensity of the combat during which they were taken. Although the differences between the fictional sequences and the documentary footage are obvious, the spectator accepts them as the product of their different origins. Fiction and documentary thus coexist, perfectly integrated, in the classical combat scenes in *Sands of Iwo Jima*. In *The Desert Fox*, documentary footage dominates the battle scenes. In fact, it is the only material used to create the combat sequences, which have an extremely high emotional intensity. Moreover, the film juxtaposes documentary images with an average shot duration of 1 second, while the combat sce-

nes in the other films analysed average around 5 seconds per shot (due to the interruption of the action shots with long dialogues). Only the most recent films, *Patton* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* match the pace of *The Desert Fox* in a few segments, although they do so using recreated footage (also combined with slow dialogue).

The classical invisibility of the enunciation is not present in these battle scenes that highlight their fragmentation, either by the aforementioned juxtaposition of documentary footage with dialogues or moments of action filmed for the production, or by the use of multiple perspectives to present events like the launching of torpedoes in *Destination Tokyo* or the gunfire from the ships in *Sands of Iwo Jima*. The multiple perspective technique is taken furthest in *The Desert Fox*, where a series of shots show the same gunfire from a tank, or in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, where the same explosion is depicted nine times from different points of view on the deck of a ship.

Fragmentation is also highlighted in these films through techniques that are out of keeping with the classical formula, such as the use of forward leaps and backward leaps (changing the size of the frames that present the same event without changing the perspective or angle). This serves to magnify the gunfire from the tanks at the Battle of El Alamein in *The Desert Fox*, and to present the first death at Pearl Harbor in *From Here to Eternity* (Images 3 and 4).

Image 2. The war documentaries set the standard for depictions of D-Day with iconic images that would often be reproduced, like this one in *The Longest Day*



A sudden change to in the axis of action, considered an error in classical film grammar because it may disorient the spectator, is sometimes used in the combat scenes analysed. This technique lends dynamism to the battle scenes in *Sands of Iwo Jima*, magnifies the gunfire that will take down the Japanese plane in *From Here to Eternity* (Images 5 and 6), and underscores the chaos and confusion in the military band playing the American national anthem when the air strike begins in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* The axis of action is not respected either in the juxtaposition of documentary footage showing the gunfire from the ships on D-Day in *The Desert Fox*.

The influence of the war documentary can also be seen in the absence of music in the battle scenes analysed (only *Destination Tokyo* and *The Desert Fox* include musical accompaniment in all of their combat scenes; the other films all feature at least one battle without music). The musical silence further underscores the fragmentation of the enunciation of the battles, as it gives centre stage to the gunfire and explosions, which are also synchronised with the moment of the cut to surprise the spectator and increase the tension.

Images 3 and 4.

The leap-forward technique highlights the fragmentation and accelerates the rhythmic sensation of especially tense moments like this surprise attack in *From Here to Eternity*



Images 5 and 6. Sudden changes to the axis of action contribute dynamism or magnify actions like the gunshot that would take down the enemy aircraft in *From Here to Eternity*





Image 7. In *Paths of Glory* the point of view is protected from the combat by elements located in the foreground that are shown out of focus

The segments of dialogue in the battle scenes analysed do adhere to all the classical composition and editing norms. They use wide shots, taken from an elevated point of view (assured and omniscient) or from an epic low angle. There are no elements in the foreground and the shots are composed according to the rule of thirds. They are static or have fluid movement and are presented in continuity using cutting on action, respecting the axis of action and points of view and repeating previously shown camera perspectives. But the shots of the most intense moments articulated by the fragments of warfare break with these conventions, resulting in a striking stylistic contrast. To do this, they make use of filming techniques typical of a camera operator on the battlefield. In *Paths of Glory*, a hand-held camera is used to show the protagonist coming out of the trench and calling his patrol to action, while in *The Longest Day* Robert Mitchum is shown the same way when he runs to take cover behind a dune on Omaha Beach. Kubrick's film also uses a telephoto lens to highlight the roughness of the terrain that the lateral tracking shots move over as they track the advance of the French troops.

This film, *Tora, Tora! Tora!* and *Patton* all use sudden camera movements, typical of filming on the battlefield, such as zoom in, zoom out or sweeps, and all include branches, rocks or soldiers passing in the foreground that are shown out of focus (Image 7).

Another technique inherited from the war documentary that renders the filmic enunciation visible in contravention of classical norms, but that also adds to the realism of the text, is the camera being shaken by the impact of nearby explosions. This is used in *Destination Tokyo*, *Sands of Iwo Jima*, *Paths of Glory*, *From Here to Eternity*, *Patton* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* These films also use sweeps to imitate the cameraman running for cover. Other ways of making the presence and vulnerability of the point of view evident are the frontal views of the shots showing aircraft fire, as we see in *From Here to Eternity* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and the explosions in *Battleground* or *Patton*, and the camera being covered in sand or engulfed in smoke, as occurs in *Sands of Iwo Jima*, *Paths of Glory* or *Patton*. These techniques distance the enunciation of the battle from classical omniscience, placing the spectator right on the battle-



Image 8. The subjective point of view of the air strike is exciting because of the fast pace and the danger entailed in filming it, as in this case in *From Here to Eternity*

field, as does the use of POV shots from the perspective of soldiers, pilots or the enemy. Pilot POVs are often used for spectacular effect, as overhead shots give a clear view of the magnitude of the extras and special effects deployed in the scene. Some are taken from documentary footage, as is the case in *Battleground*, *Sands of Iwo Jima* and *The Desert Fox*. Worthy of special mention are the aerial shots in the fictional re-enactments, especially the shot showing the battle at Sainte-Mère-Eglise in *The Longest Day* and the bombing of Pearl Harbor in *From Here to Eternity* (Image 8) and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* The documentary footage of the battles in *Sands of Iwo Jima* and *The Desert Fox* and the re-enactment offered in some shots in *The Longest Day* also show the point of view of ship and landing craft crew, while in *Sands of Iwo Jima*, we are offered the POV of the driver of a tank as it rolls along the beach. Direct

identification with the emotions of the soldier is also elicited through the use of the point of view of the sniper (foregrounding his back or his gun) in *The Steel Helmet*, *Patton* (Image 9) and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*

SOVIET EXPRESSIVENESS IN HOLLYWOOD

The abandonment of continuity in favour of the juxtaposition characteristic of montage in numerous moments of battle scenes in the films chosen for study is not the only technique imported from Soviet cinema that breaks with the classical formula. Although it is not very common in the sample analysed, three battle sequences articulate a montage that synthesises or constructs poetic intentions in certain fragments. *Battleground* depicts the bombing of Bastogne through the juxtaposition of explosions over different objects with one of those objects falling after a nearby impact. Stanley Kubrick's first film, *Fear and Desire*, depicts the killing of two soldiers through the juxtaposition of close-ups and detail shots that are not connected by cutting on action; instead, they break the axis of action and present opposing compositions on each change of frame (Images 10, 11, 12 and 13).

Image 9. The semi-subjective point of view of the sniper enhances the identification with the foot soldier in *Patton*



This fragment constitutes a major stylistic contrast with a strong emotional impact, because it is connected to a scene given the opposite treatment (i.e. occurring in full continuity), and because the average shot duration is reduced from 4 seconds to less than 1 second per cut. *Patton* also makes use of a poetic montage in its final battle scene. The protagonist reading a letter and the entry of music drown out the direct sound of a juxtaposition of shots of explosions and gunfire. The presentation of frontal explosions that shake the camera but make no sound has an anti-natural effect. The poetic intention of this use of sound is clear.

COEXISTENCE OF BOTH TYPES OF REALISM IN CLASSICAL BATTLE SCENES

This study has examined cinematographic and editing techniques that broke with the dominant style in the depiction of battles in classical cinema. However, it should not be forgotten that these techniques were used in particular segments or shots and that they coexisted in these sequences with dialogue or action presented according to the principles of classical realism (except in the case of *The Desert Fox* or in the battles presented using constructive montage sequences in *Battleground*, *Fear and Desire* and *Patton*). If we analyse the rest

Images 10 to 13. In *Fear and Desire* Kubrick uses a synthetic montage to portray a killing by juxtaposing close-ups and detail shots



of the film apart from the battle scenes, we will find that most of them respect the classical model.

Although the ground-breaking strategies described in this article are limited to a small proportion of the total duration of the films analysed (given that the battle scenes represent around 30% of the film at most, as is the case of *Sands of Iwo Jima*), the battle sequences are essential for presenting the experience of war and eliciting an emotional reaction from spectators that will enable them to identify with the film's ideological message. Of course, the expressive and rhetorical significance of these innovative techniques inherited from the war documentary and Soviet montage is not limited to the result of the classical films analysed here. These strategies, which shaped the code of war realism, were further developed in the films of the 1970s and 1980s about Vietnam and ultimately evolved into the hyperrealism of the 1990s and the war film as we know it today. ■

NOTES

- 1 The word "simulacrum" is used here in the sense given to it by Baudrillard (1988: 166-184).
- 2 With the impact of the bombs on the camera, its frames from a low angle sheltered behind blurred elements in the foreground, and with problems of composition due to the surrounding danger and the camera's sudden and unstable movements.
- 3 Many of these scenes are interspersed with dialogues that take place away from the combat and are completely distinct from the style used for the battle scenes.
4. The doctoral thesis "Un modelo de análisis dialéctico del montaje: El caso práctico del cine bélico norteamericano contemporáneo. *Salvar al soldado Ryan y Black Hawk derribado*" (Fernández-Ramírez, 2014) was the first study to apply the approach and methodology of dialectical analysis to the description of the audiovisual techniques used in battle sequences. This article continues that line of research begun in the thesis to identify the filmmaking techniques used to intensify

the spectator's experience in order to produce a specific ideological effect on the audience, turning the battle into an Eisensteinian attraction. This article turns its object of study to the classical battle scene for the purpose of defining the techniques that broke with the dominant stylistic formula to shape a new realist code that would affect a spectator who was turned into a witness of the actual war. Its conclusions will help identify the classical origin of the audiovisual strategies of the contemporary war film described in the aforementioned doctoral thesis that are responsible for its hyperrealism.

- 5 Some documentary footage has become so iconic that the image of soldiers disembarking from the landing craft at Omaha Beach is also re-enacted in contemporary war films like *Saving Private Ryan*.

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GROUND-BREAKING EXPRESSIVE STRATEGIES IN THE WAR FILMS OF CLASSICAL REALISM

Abstract

Classical Hollywood cinema applied a stylistic formula that would come to shape cinematic realism. This article offers a detailed analysis of the cinematographic and editing techniques that diverged from classical conventions in some of the battle scenes produced between 1942 (after the United States entered the Second World War) and the end of the classical period (around 1970). The study shows how techniques derived from war documentaries and Soviet montage shaped a new kind of cinematic realism. War realism broke away from the classical style to increase the emotional impact on a viewer who had to become emotionally engaged with the protagonists in order to identify with an ideological message. The ground-breaking strategies of some of the most famous battle scenes of classical cinema laid the foundations for what has evolved into the hyperrealism of the contemporary war film or of the action film in general.

Key words

War Film; Combat; Classical Cinema; Documentary; Editing; Cinematography.

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EL LENGUAJE RUPTURISTA Y EXPRESIVO DEL REALISMO BÉLICO CLÁSICO

Resumen

El cine clásico de Hollywood aplicó una fórmula estilística que vino a configurar el realismo cinematográfico. Este artículo presenta un análisis pormenorizado de los recursos de planificación y montaje que se apartaron de esas convenciones en algunas de las secuencias de combate producidas entre 1942, después de la entrada de los Estados Unidos en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, y el fin del periodo clásico (en torno a 1970). El estudio muestra los recursos procedentes del cine documental de guerra y el *montage* soviético que conformaron un nuevo realismo: el realismo bélico rompía con el clásico para magnificar el impacto emocional de un espectador que debía comprometerse con los protagonistas para alinearse con un mensaje ideológico. El lenguaje rompedor de algunos combates destacados del cine clásico sentó las bases de lo que hoy, tras evolucionar, ha tenido como desenlace el hiperrealismo del cine bélico contemporáneo o el cine de acción en general.

Palabras clave

Cine bélico; combate; cine clásico; documental; montaje; planificación.

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