Representation Of Dehumanization In Full Metal Jacket

Throughout cinematic history, war stories have become a staple within the genres in film. These films explored not only the events surrounding the war in particular, but also introduces the audience to the soldiers' struggles, feelings, and eventual trauma. Media properties in popular culture such as Full Metal Jacket provides a commentary on the Vietnam War, where the soldiers' experiences are utilized to disclose the moral issues of America's involvement in the war and to analyze the military's tactics in degrading and destroying their spirits to create soldiers that doubled as cold-blooded assassins. In Stanley Kubrick's film, Full Metal Jacket, he examines the complete mental breakdown of soldiers to transform them from boys to cold-blooded killers, hardening their perception of the world and contributing to their PTSD.

In the first act, the film sets up a lighter tone as the drill sergeant, Hartman, takes the center stage to excessively humiliate the soldiers' during their time in basic training. Hartman's lack of empathy is used as a tool to whip his soldiers into shape, and he strips them of their individuality by giving them nicknames based on their behavior. His institutionalized bullying is especially targeted toward one soldier that he nicknames "Gomer Pyle", and he relentlessly insults Pyle based on his actions, attitude, and appearance. The final act of Hartman's group punishment for Pyle's actions causes the platoon to initiate an overnight attack and witnessing his only friend and fellow soldier, Private Joker, join in on the attack pushes him to reach his breaking point (Doherty 27-8). Within Pyle's kind-hearted spirit, his self-worth is obliterated and he turns into the model soldier that Hartman was trying to create by removing any sense of humanity that was left of him. Pyle's transformation was not as successful compared to the other Marines, however, and he soon experiences a mental breakdown due to the problems that exist in the ethics of combat training. This mentality drove Pyle down a road where the killing machine inside him murders Hartman and himself because his body was unable to deal with his mental transformation. Pyle's destruction of character represents the beginning of the PTSD that the soldiers suffered as a result of their involvement in the Vietnam War; a troop of discouraged soldiers, who were rewired to kill on sight, returned home because they did not know how to maintain their humanity during the war.

The second act shifts into a somber nature as the film fast-forwards to the focus set back on the protagonist, Joker, stationed as a sergeant in Vietnam. Joker represents the antithesis of the military as someone who is grounded on his Pacifist morals, much to the frustration of his fellow soldiers when they ridicule him for his values before the start of the Tet Offensive. His moral compass is tested when he must shoot a sniper, a teenage girl, an action that breaks him to his core. His decision to perform a mercy killing on the sniper finishes Joker's self-destruction of his Pacifist ideals and completes his integration into the military (Reaves 234). The soldiers' conversion into fighting machines reveals how the enemy stands like the ones who created these merciless monsters rather than the Vietnamese. Therefore, he wins in the battle but he loses in the fight against conforming to the military's standards. Full Metal Jacket shows the grueling horrors of the military and how the system breaks men down to build them back up as obedient weapons., showcasing an unfiltered glimpse at a soldier's experiences during the Vietnam War. Ultimately, the soldiers in the Vietnam War learned that their individuality does not belong under a regulated environment since their identity is solely to fulfill the role that is expected of them from the military. The final shot of dark silhouettes marching to their

campground confirms that their stories do not end on a happy note, but rather acknowledges their loss of innocence and honor.

In the film, Full Metal Jacket, Kubrick showcases how the dehumanization that comes with the war contributes to the mental deterioration of a soldier's psyche. The film explores the different paths that soldiers take to only end up experiencing the same consequences that leave them with regret and hopelessness. Kubrick altogether proves the ineffectiveness and hypocrisy for the military's goals to achieve "justice". Other than the fact that a soldier's duty is to kill, Full Metal Jacket does not provide any concrete reasoning for their involvement in combat against Vietnam. In the end, most war veterans are left unable to justify their actions, leaving them empty for answers that did not exist.