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Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse

By Fax Bahr

My film is not a movie.
My film is not about Vietnam.
It is Vietnam.
It's what it was really like. It was crazy.
And the way we made it was very much
like the way
the Americans were in Vietnam.
We were in the jungle.
There were too many of us.
We had access to too much money,
too much equipment,
and little by little, we went insane.
This movie I'm making
is not in the tradition
of the great Max Ophuls
or David Lean even.
This movie was made in the tradition of
Irwin Allen.
I made the most vulgar, entertaining,
exciting, action-full, sensoramic,
give-them-a-new-thrill-
every-five-minutes,
have it everything, sex, violence, humor,
because I want people
to come and see it.
But the questions that I kept facing
or running into,
into the stupid script about
four guys going up to kill a guy...
But that was the story.
But the questions that that story
kept putting me, I couldn't answer.
Yet I knew that I had constructed
the film in such a way
that to not answer would be to fail.
The film Francis is making is
a metaphor for a journey into self.
He has made that journey
and is still making it.
It's scary to watch someone you love
go into the center of himself
and confront his fears,
fear of failure, fear of death,
fear of going insane.

You have to fail a little,
die a little, go insane a little,
to come out the other side.
The process is not over for Francis.
My greatest fear
is to make a really shitty,
embarrassing, pompous film
on an important subject,
and I am doing it.
I confront it. I acknowledge.
I will tell you right straight from
the most sincere depths of my heart,
the film will not be good.
It's like going to school.
You finish your term paper
and maybe you get a B instead
of an A+ that you wanted,
so you got a B.
But I'm gonna get an F.
This film is a \$20-million disaster.
Why won't anyone believe me?
I am thinking of shooting myself!
Good evening.
This is Orson Welles
inviting you to listen now
to *The Heart of Darkness*
by Joseph Conrad.
Imagine the feelings of a skipper
of a fine frigate or a bark.
A civilized man
at the very end of the world.
He'd land in a swamp,
march through the woods,
and in some inland post
feel the savagery,
the utter savagery that stirs
in the forests and the jungles
in the hearts of wild men.
In 1939, Orson Welles planned
to make *Heart of Darkness*
as his first motion picture.
Heart of Darkness is the story
of a ship captain's journey
up the Congo River

to find Mr. Kurtz, an ivory trader
stationed deep in the jungle.
A brilliant man of high ideals,
Kurtz intends to enlighten the natives.
Instead, he succumbs
to the primal temptations
of the jungle and goes insane.
Screen tests were done
with Welles as Kurtz
and sets were designed,
but the studio backed away
from the project,
fearing the elaborate production
would go over budget.
Welles made Citizen Kane instead.
Heart of Darkness was abandoned
in pre-production.
In 1969, Francis founded
American Zoetrope,
a company dedicated to filmmaking
outside of the Hollywood system.
One of their first projects
was Apocalypse Now,
a Vietnam War story based loosely
on Heart of Darkness.
Apocalypse Now concerns
a Captain Willard on his mission
to assassinate
a Green Beret colonel named Kurtz.
Kurtz has gone insane
and is conducting the war
on his own terms deep in Cambodia.
George Lucas was to direct
John Milius' screenplay.
Francis said that Heart of Darkness,
which was one of my favorite things
I'd ever read,
he said it had been tried
and no one could lick it.
He said that Orson Welles tried it
and he couldn't lick it.
Richard Brooks, I think,
or somebody else...
That's the best thing

to tell a young writing student,
you know, say,
"No one could possibly write this."
That was the first thing I tried.
The war was raging then,
and everybody was either
getting set to go or to get out of it
or whatever they were going to do.
And we prepared a method of
doing this whole thing in Vietnam.
We were going to do it
in 16 millimeter in Vietnam.
That was John's idea.
That was John's idea.
I was the one that was gonna
have to go over and do it.
John is very good at being grand.
We would have been there right in time
for Tet, probably and whatever.
And all these people
that were in school with me
who'd done terrible things
or were planning to go to Canada,
do something as drastic
as getting married to avoid the war,
they were willing to go to Vietnam.
They didn't care.
They wanted to carry lights
and sound equipment over minefields.
And I think that Warner Brothers
finally backed off on it
because they figured
most of us would probably be killed
because we were so stupid.
We then tried to take Apocalypse
around to all the other studios.
Nobody wanted to have anything to do
with it and they just... "No way."
Why?
Because it was during the war
and there was a lot of...
I don't know whether it was pressure
or just fear or whatever,
but the studios would not finance a film

about the Vietnam War.
People were so bitter
about the war, you know,
that there were riots.
Remember, we were living at a time
when there really were riots
on the streets.
People were spitting on soldiers.
And studio executives,
they're the last people
who are gonna get
in the middle of that thing.
Studio executives are not noted
for their social courage.
Without a studio,
Apocalypse Now was shelved,
and Francis put his dreams
for Zoetrope on hold.
He went on to direct
The Godfather Parts I and I I.
The films won eight Academy Awards
and made Francis a multimillionaire.
In 1975, he revived his plans
for Zoetrope
and chose Apocalypse Now
as its first project.
I was in the position whereas I wanted
to always write original work.
Original work really takes
six, eight months minimum to do,
and here was the script of Apocalypse
that we could clean up
and send out immediately.
So I basically said,
"Well, what if I just
did Apocalypse Now?"
And in doing so,
we were able to make our company
independent and further our goal.
But nothing really prepared me
for the date I had
with trying to do a modern telling
of Heart of Darkness
in a Vietnam setting.

Mike, would you read Kilgore?
Glenn, I'd like you to read... No.
I'll wait for a minute.
I'd like Tommy, you read Willard.
Freddy's gonna read Chef.
And, Sam, you read Lance.
And, Albert, you read Chief, okay?
Let's just... What we'll do now,
we'll just read it, just to read it,
to know what we're doing.
Apocalypse Now has been budgeted
at \$13 million.
In order to maintain creative control,
Francis had to raise the money himself.
If the film goes over budget,
Francis is responsible.
He has put up our personal assets
as collateral.
A couple of million dollars
of Francis' money was in it.
But that was Francis' style.
His philosophy was always,
and remains to this date is,
"I'm gonna go and make the movie.
"And if everybody knows
I'm going to make it,
"it will fall into place.
"And if I don't go forward
as if I'm making it and start making it,
"nothing will happen. "
My attitude towards money has always
been, "I don't have very much of it,
"but if I use it in a very audacious way,
it multiplies it."
If you have \$ 1,000, but you're willing
to use it, really not caring of risking,
you can make it feel like \$ 10,000.
Marlon Brando has sent word
that he will do the part of Kurtz.
Brando has agreed to three weeks
of shooting at a million dollars a week.
Francis sent him a \$1 million advance.
After auditioning dozens of actors,
Harvey Keitel has been cast

as Captain Willard.
For the four-man boat crew
who will take Willard upriver,
Sam Bottoms will play Lance.
Albert Hall, Chief.
Frederic Forrest, Chef,
and Larry Fishburne, age 14,
will play Mr. Clean.
The whole thing's really fun.
I mean, a war is fun. Shit.
You can do anything you want to.
That's why Vietnam must
have been so much fun
for the guys that were out there.
I mean, like, I know this one dude
who came back. Shit.
And he's nothing but a dope smoker,
and all he does is smoke dope.
He said, "Vietnam was the best thing
they could have done for my ass."
The Philippines has been chosen
as the location
because of its similarity
to the terrain in Vietnam.
Since the US Army
has refused to cooperate
with a movie about the Vietnam War,
Francis has made a deal with
Philippine President, Ferdinand Marcos.
The production will pay the military
thousands of dollars per day
as well as overtime
for the Philippine pilots.
In return, Francis can use
Marcos' entire fleet of helicopters
as long as they're not needed to fight
the communist insurgency in the south.
A band of rebels
has been waging a fierce war
for control of
the southern Philippine islands.
But the real phenomenon
of being in that situation,
being in the middle of that jungle

and dealing with all the unfriendly elements that we were dealing with was part of what the movie was about. That was the first directorial decision that put us all in a circumstance that reflected, you know, what the movie was about. I gave him all the information that we had developed on shooting in the Philippines. I said, "Francis, it's one thing to go over there "for three weeks with, like, five people "and sort of scrounge a lot of footage using the Philippine army. "But if you go over there as a big Hollywood production, "they're gonna kill you, you know. "The longer you stay, the more in danger you are "of getting sucked into the swamp. "

On March 1st, I came to the Philippines with Francis and our three children, Gio, 12, Roman, 10, and Sofia, four. Francis has asked me to make a documentary film for the United Artists publicity department. I don't know if he wants to avoid the addition of a professional team on an already-overloaded production or if he's just trying to keep me busy. The heat and humidity are overwhelming. It's the first time any of us have seen water buffalo, rice paddies and nipa huts. Sofia said, "It looks like the Disneyland jungle cruise. "

Today, I shot some footage of the construction at the main set, Kurtz's compound. It is supposed to be

a decaying Cambodian temple
at the end of the river
where the character of Willard
will confront Kurtz.
Dean Tavoularis,
the production designer,
is orchestrating
the construction of the temple
out of dried adobe blocks,
each weighing 300 pounds.
There were 600 people
working on this thing.
In Hollywood or New York,
if you want another person,
it's quite a big deal.
With the fringes and their salary,
it's thousands of dollars.
So, for a dollar a day
or three dollars a day,
I hope we weren't taking advantage of
people, but that's what they were paid.
So, you could get not one person.
You could get 10 or 20 or 100.
Ever since I was a student in college,
we used to do a thing
before every production,
and since I've been making films,
we did it,
and it made those films have good luck.
And what it is...
Everyone kind of just grab someone
or touch someone
that's connected with everyone.
Gather round
so that everybody can see.
- Good luck.
- Good luck.
And then we say this word three times.
"Puwaba."
- What's the word?
- Puwaba.
Puwaba.
One, two, three.
Puwaba, puwaba, puwaba!

Hey!

It's the first day of shooting.
There's a current of excitement.
The location is a salt farm
next to a river.

In the scene, a helicopter brings Willard
to meet the patrol boat
that will take him on his mission.

Okay. Stand by!

Action!

On one level, the film
is an action-adventure story.
It's a story of a journey
into a strange and unknown area,
but it also will hopefully exist
on a philosophical and allegorical level,
so that, ultimately,
my desire is that it sheds some light
on the events that took place
and why they took place
and what it did

to the people involved in them.
Almost we are persuaded
that there is something after all,
something essential waiting for all of us
in the dark areas of the world,
aboriginally loathsome, immeasurable,
and certainly, nameless.

Last night, Francis watched the footage
from the first week's shooting.

They were the scenes
with Harvey Keitel, who plays Willard.

Afterward, he sat down on the couch
with the editors and said,

"Well, what do you think?"

I went upstairs to say
good night to the children,
and when I came down

15 minutes later,
Francis had made the decision
to replace his leading man.

We bit the bullet
and did a very, very unpleasant thing,
which is replace an actor

in mid-shooting.
Not only unpleasant, but expensive,
since we had to throw out
several weeks of work and start over.
Take one.
Action.
What do you think, Willard?
Terminate the Colonel.
Terminate with extreme prejudice.
Two days ago, Francis shaved off
his beard and flew to Los Angeles.
He met with Martin Sheen at the airport.
Marty agreed to take the role of Willard.
I had some personal concerns
about my own physical condition.
I was 36 at the time,
and I felt old and out of shape,
and I was smoking three packs a day,
not a healthy guy.
I wondered if I'd be able
to keep up a strenuous schedule.
At the time I hired on, I remember
it was only a 16-week shoot,
which didn't prove to be the case,
but who knew that at the time?
It is the fifth week of shooting.
It's getting hotter
as we move into summer.
Every day,
the project seems to get bigger.
Now, what I want is,
let's say, five helicopters, right?
Then you have a camera here,
a camera there.
I want two cameras at once.
We'll have a camera
with Enrico inside the Loach.
In the script,
a helicopter unit led by a brash
air cavalry colonel named Kilgore
leads an attack on a coastal village
in order to escort Willard's boat
into the river that will lead him to Kurtz.
This scene with all the extras

and special effects
is the most logistically complicated
of Francis' career.
Francis was always reminding me.
He says, "Vittorio, remember,
this is not just a documentary
"about the war in Vietnam.
"This is a main show in the sense
that wherever America goes,
"they make a big show on everything.
"They make a big event.
"They make a big show
about lights, music.
"Even the idea to put Wagner on
during the battle sequence,
"it's part of the show.
It's part of the opera.
"It's part of the major fantasy
that American people has. "
- Tell them to cut.
- Cutting.
- Very good.
- All cameras are cutting!
You know, just at the last scene,
the third trip,
when the Huey come,
they pass too high.
Okay. This is Coppola.
All aircraft, all Hornets,
all picture aircraft,
everyone land in the rice paddies.
We'll have a meeting.
Because of the civil war in the south,
everyday, the government
sends different pilots
who haven't participated
in the rehearsals,
wrecking tens of thousands
of dollars worth of shots.
All day today, a Philippine
air force general was on the set.
There were rumors that the rebels
were in the hills about 10 miles away.
The Filipino commanders were afraid

there could be an attack
on the helicopters we were using.
In the middle of a complicated shot,
the helicopters were called away
to fight the rebels.
So, what?
- They're taking away five.
- Five? They said two.
Wait a second. Stand by.
We just heard they're taking away
five of our helicopters.
Should we do it?
The Huey go away.
We'll do it next week.
There have been stories in the press
about production problems with the film.
Has the filming been delayed?
Well, we're behind,
but we have not stopped shooting at all.
I mean, it's just that
the film is enormous.
I would say it's twice the scope
in terms of the production
of any film I've done,
including the two Godfathers together.
And it's such an enormous film
with so many different aspects.
We're out here hacking inch by inch.
We are up against, everyday,
100 problems.
It's like a great war itself.
- Change!
- You mean right now, sir?
I wanna see how rideable that stuff is.
Go change.
It's still pretty hairy out there, sir.
- Do you wanna surf, soldier?
- Yes, sir.
That's good, son,
'cause you either surf or fight.
That clear? Now, get going.
I guess these air cavalry guys
did some pretty crazy stuff.
I heard from some

of the technical advisors
stories about the air cavalry
that were real,
that would serve my fulfilling fiction,
that they really did,
you know, like, for instance,
a guy would go into his helicopter
in North Vietnam
and try to hook a bicycle and steal it
with the runner.
And they would shoot at him.
He'd hover a while
until they stopped shooting.
Then they'd finally hook the bicycle
and stole...
It's like games to break up
the boredom of being in that war.
Men play strange games.
I love the smell of napalm in the morning.
You know, one time
we had a hill bombed for 12 hours.
And when it was all over, I walked up.
We didn't find one of them,
not one stinking dink body.
But the smell, you know,
that gasoline smell...
The whole hill,
it smelled like
victory.
Someday this war's gonna end.
It was a combination of
notjust Heart of Darkness,
but, like, the Odyssey.
Kilgore was like the Cyclops.
He was something that had to
be overcome, had to be tricked.
And then the Playboy bunnies
were like the Sirens.
This sure enough is a bizarre sight
in the middle of this shit.
The war was taking on
an interesting character,
and it was becoming a psychedelic war,
you know.

The culture was influencing,
sort of seeping into Southeast Asia.
The strange US culture
that was going on
where you really get a tone
that it is a rock 'n' roll war,
that things have gone a little further
than anyone realized.
At the point
when we were developing this,
nobody knew that
there were drugs over there.
Nobody knew all the craziness
that was going on.
A lot was being kept back.
So it was a chance
to really make a movie
that would reveal a lot of things.
What we'd done is strung together
all of John's anecdotes
and some of the things
that he had from his friends
who had been fighting over there.
And it was really a quest
or a trek or something
that would take us through
the various aspects of the Vietnam War,
and we would see it
for the insanity that it was.
At that point, we had it ending
in a very large battle with the Viet Cong
and having Willard
and the Kurtz character
fighting off all the Viet Cong.
And then when they bring in the
helicopters to bring his men out,
he says,
"No, I fought too hard for this land, "
and he shoots down the helicopter.
"I summon fire from the sky.
"Do you know what it is
to be a white man
"who can summon fire from the sky?
What it means?

"You can live and die for these things.

"Not silly ideals

that are always betrayed...

"What do you fight for, Captain?"

Then he answers,

"Because it feels good."

I never cared for the ending so much.

I always thought the ending was weak.

The ending didn't top

what had happened with the helicopters,

and it didn't answer

any of the kind of moral issues

that got into a real gung-ho,

macho kind of a comic book ending.

And my choice was to make it

much more back to Heart of Darkness

than really John and George

were intending.

I'd like to save the in-depth stuff

for the second reading.

And I think very early on,

I knew that even when I arrived there,

I was gonna take John's script

and mate it with Heart of Darkness

and whatever happened

to me in the jungle.

I mean, I knew that was, like,

my concept.

This afternoon Francis got a call

from his attorney.

Apparently, Brando is refusing to

give Francis the extra time he needs

to rewrite the ending of the movie.

Brando is threatening

to drop out of the project

and keep his million-dollar advance.

Yeah, but are they seriously saying

that Marlon would take a million dollars

and then not show up?

And imagine, here I am

with about 50 things that

are just quasi in my control,

like the Philippine government

and fucking helicopters

which they take away
whenever they feel like,
and they've done it three times already.
I mean, all I'm asking is for Marlon
to allow me to start him a little later.
And I know it's all my fault.
But I'm saying is that
do I also have to shoot
the last 30 minutes of the movie
in the beginning?
Tell them to keep acting, Randy.
I assumed that there would be
some malleability about Marlon,
and I also didn't realize the immensity
of the constructions and stuff.
I mean, the picture's
bigger than I thought. It's just gigantic.
I personally, as an artist,
would love the opportunity
to just finish the picture up until the end,
take four weeks off,
work with Marlon, rewrite it,
and then in just three weeks,
do the ending.
I think I could make
the best film that way.
It seems like such a,
kind of, bright thing to do.
And I feel that the people back there
feel that postponement is like,
"The picture's in trouble or something. "
It's just that very intelligent,
major studios
used to do things like this all the time.
No, I know that.
And that's what sort of bugs me
is the ludicrousness of thinking
that I'm gonna go through
all that I'm doing,
after all I've been through in the past,
after all the pictures I've made
and after shooting 16 weeks,
that I'm not gonna finish a movie
in which I've invested

three years of my life just because...
I mean, it's stupid, man.
Yeah, but even if Brando drops dead,
I can still finish the movie.
I'll just get another actor.
If I can't get Redford,
I'll go back to Nicholson.
If I can't get Nicholson,
I'll go back to Pacino.
If I can't go to Pacino,
I'll go back to someone else.
I mean, sooner or later,
I can get someone for three weeks.
I mean, it's not in the cards
that we're not going to finish the movie.
This is the first day of heavy rain.
A typhoon is off the coast.
I've never seen it rain so hard.
Water has started coming
in the rooms downstairs,
and Sofia is splashing around in it.
Francis has decided to make pasta,
and he's turned on
La Boheme full volume.
I knew that if weather came,
that I was gonna try to incorporate it.
I didn't realize that
it was on such a big scale.
So I was only thinking
that I got to shoot tomorrow.
Even after that typhoon hit,
he began to film.
He said, "This has happened,
and monsoons hit Vietnam.
"There's a lot of mud,
a lot of rain around. Let's film."
Hey, don't leave without me.
We went to lba
to shoot the scene that got cut.
The set was, like, 80% demolished.
It was, like, mud up to the knees.
It was like pissing, man.
I mean, it was hitting you so hard,
it hurt.

It started out just as raining a lot,
and after a while, we realized
it was knocking out
centers of civilizations,
and rivers were overrunning,
and people couldn't get to the places...
They were all on the roofs
of hotels and stuff.
We had to stop for a while.
And I realized that certain sets
had been destroyed.
In order to rebuild the sets,
Francis has closed down
the production for two months.
The cast and crew
have been sent home.
It was an opportunity
for everyone, really,
to have a little relief from the situation,
because it became apparent
that it was gonna go on longer
than we realized in the beginning.
Last night, we slept outside on the lawn.
It was beautiful, so clear, with stars.
Francis tossed and turned,
having nightmares.
This morning he said he'd had a dream
about how to finish the script.
But now that he was awake,
it wasn't any good.
He said he couldn't go on
making the John Milius script
because it didn't really express
his ideas,
and he still doesn't know how to make
the film into his personal vision.
He's been struggling with this
for so long.
He knows the material
backwards and forwards.
He is practically chasing his tail.
First of all, I call this whole movie
the Idiodyssey.
- The Idiodyssey?

- This is the Idiodysey.
None of my tools, none of my tricks,
none of my ways of doing things
works for this ending.
I have tried so many times
that I know I can't do it.
It might be a big victory
to know that I can't do it.
I can't write the ending to this movie.
I was on the spot.
I had gotten myself into something big.
Some people had come through,
a lot of people hadn't.
And it was my job
and also my financial burden
to pick up the pieces
and finish the movie.
I didn't quite understand
all the ramifications of the financing.
I felt that he'd do whatever he had to,
we'd borrow the money.
But I really support him as an artist,
and I feel like whatever
the artist needs to do
in order to get his artwork is okay.
And I always felt confident.
So what's the worst that can happen?
They take away your big house,
they take away your car, so what?
He was a very creative person
and could make another film
and could do another job
and earn his living and provide for us.
So I really wasn't frightened by it.
In fact, at that point in time,
we had escalated our lifestyle.
We had this big
22-room Victorian house,
you know, a staff and a screening room.
Life was kind of complicated for me.
And entertaining...
And I would have loved
to have had my lifestyle
reduced to some smaller scale.

So that part of me
was just fearless in that regard.
It really didn't matter if it all went
down the tubes in financing this project.
It was really okay.
A melodrama is currently
playing itself out in Hollywood
that for sheer emotionalism
rivals anything put on film.
The embattled figure in this drama
is director Francis Coppola,
who once again finds himself
waging a war
to keep his dream financially afloat.
Now, if you read newspapers at all
or listen to the radio, you know
that Mr. Coppola has been involved
in the production of this motion picture
for more years than
even he would care to count.
The press painted a portrait of me
as sort of a crazy person
and financially irresponsible,
which I don't particularly think
is really true.
No doubt that it was my money.
But the difference was that
Apocalypse Now was about Vietnam.
That was what made it sound
like such a crazy financial bet.
Did you ever consider quitting?
How am I going to quit from myself?
Am I going to say, "Francis, I quit"?
You know, I was financing the movie.
How could I quit?
July 25th, 1976.
We've returned to the Philippines
to resume production.
Francis hopes to finish shooting
in the early fall.
There is a kind of powerful exhilaration
in the face of losing everything,
like the excitement of war
when one kills

or takes the chance of being killed.
Francis has taken
the biggest risk of his life
in the way he's making this film.
This film is now \$3 million over budget,
which the distributor, United Artists,
has agreed to put up.
But Francis has to pay it back if the film
doesn't make \$40 million or more.
That just gets me all the more focused
on the present moment
and not allow myself to think
about the "what-ifs" of the future.
I know that every building that's built
runs into big production overages,
every bridge that's built.
Every NASA project,
any large project that involves
lots of people, conditions, weather,
of a construction nature,
goes over all the time.
And a movie is no exception.
It's true that
since it was my own money,
and once I felt that
I was going in a direction,
I wanted to continue
going in that direction.
Since it was my money,
I just did it, really.
There was a sequence in the film,
so-called the French plantation
sequence,
and it involved
the PBR coming ashore
to this rubber plantation still run
by these French-speaking people,
and they had a whole bunch of cadre,
and they'd been fighting the Viet Minh
before the Viet Cong,
and they weren't letting go.
Hey, this is
French plantation discussion.
French plantation...

The whole scene is gonna be made
of wisps of fog close to the ground,
and a place that's like a dream.
If you need more fog machines...
Have more than enough machines.
How much do they cost?
- Can I buy the ones I already bought?
- Sure.
Okay, I'll give them to you as a gift
after the show,
but have enough of them.
Now, I want some real machine guns.
Get the PC to go over
and strafe the side of that house
as though Fidel Castro
had his last stand there.
I'd like three or four French people,
and I'll spend money for it.
But I don't want to fly them from France.
If you can't get them from Hong Kong,
Singapore, Japan, Okinawa,
then I will fly them from France.
White wine should be served ice cold.
Red wine should be served
at about 58 degrees.
Should be opened approximately
an hour to an hour-and-a-half
to even two hours before served.
I want a French ceremony
that is right out of a fucking...
I want the French to say,
"My God, how did they do that?"
Well, my idea was,
as they progressed up the river,
they were, like,
going back more and more in time
in a funny kind of way,
that we were revisiting
the history of Vietnam in reverse.
And the first stop was
in the '50s almost.
We now are with the French.
That was what I was looking for
in the French plantation

that was a kind of ghostly afterview
of something,
almost like they talk about the light
from the stars.
We see it after the star's already dead,
you know, and it was that kind of mood.
It was like having dinner
with a family of ghosts.
There were still a few hundred of them
left on plantations all over Vietnam,
trying to keep themselves convinced
that it was still 1950.
They weren't French anymore,
and they'd never be Vietnamese.
They were floating loose in history,
without a country.
They were hanging on
by their fingernails, but so were we.
We just had more fingernails in it.
How long can you possibly stay here?
- Stay?
- No, no. I mean,
when will you go back home to France?
Back home?
I mean, this is our home, Captain.
- Sooner or later, you're gonna...
- No, Captain!
I mean, you don't know anything
about the French mentality.
It was just the idea
of the French still being there.
There was some speech
that he gives at the end, that he said,
"If they drive us from the house,
we will live in a ditch,
"and if they push us out of the ditch,
we'll live in the jungle.
"All the time we will clean
the blood from our bayonets."
I like that.
So when you ask me
why we want to stay here, Captain,
we want to stay here because it's ours.
It belongs to us.

It keeps our family together.
I mean, we fight for that.
While you Americans,
you are fighting
for the biggest nothing in history.
Our budgets were cut way down
and we didn't get the cast
that we wanted.
But of course, the art department
and the other departments
didn't cut theirs down,
so I was very incensed
that I had this extraordinary set,
that costly set.
Extraordinary decorations and stuff.
I was just angry
at the French sequence.
I cut it out, out of that.
I was very unhappy on every count.
The light, the whole thing.
So everyone forget that we even shot it.
No longer does it exist.
What I'm worried about is that I'm
getting into a self-indulgent pattern.
But don't you, on the one hand,
feel like that's
where your gifts as an artist
are working?
They're on that brink
of not knowing what to do.
What if you just scream out
to the heavens,
"I don't know what the fuck I'm doing!"
I've done that.
That's another form of self-indulgence.
I'm sure I've missed
a whole bunch of opportunities,
and I'm gonna miss others.
But I've caught a lot of them, too.
In the end, it's how many I catch,
not how many I lose.
Francis is in a place within himself,
a place he never intended to reach,
a place of conflict.

And he can't go back down the river
because the journey has changed him.
I was watching
from the point of view of the observer,
not realizing I was on the journey, too.
Now, I can't go back to the way it was.
Neither can Francis.
Neither can Willard.
It was like traveling back to
the earliest beginnings of the world
when vegetation rioted on the Earth
and the big trees were kings.
Trees, millions of trees,
massive, immense, running up high.
And at their foot,
hugging the bank against the stream,
crept the little begrimed steamboat,
like a sluggish beetle
crawling on the floor of a lofty portico.
Where the company men
imagined it crawled to, I don't know.
For me,
it crawled toward Kurtz.
Francis works in a very intuitive way.
So he likes to take advantage of things
as he moves along through a picture.
And Francis just likes it to flow.
And whenever you do that,
you end up with a problem
of having a film
at times that is way too long
and a film that doesn't have
a really strong narrative line in it
that you can keep
the audience hooked in.
And when you get
into this anger, Albert,
don't decide where you're gonna get to.
Wherever you get to,
as long as it's out of you, is okay.
Francis used to write
on these little cards.
I managed to hold on to some of these.
- You want to read one of them?

- Well, let me get the pages right.
And see, we put them
on little cards like this.
Now we have
the main boat approaching.
Now we have the birds.
We don't have the birds great,
but we'll never get it great. The birds...
And then I propose
that we do four close-ups.
Sam, Chief, Martin, everyone,
looking at the birds,
so I can use the sound of the birds
or maybe three birds going through,
and I can create the illusion
of there being birds.
"Birds. Lance.
POVs of blackbirds. Boat."
It was like this. This was his shot list.
Sometimes we'd get pages
that would say...
It'd say "scenes unknown"
on the call sheet.
You just would show up, you know.
They didn't know
what they were going to do.
We didn't just go out there and,
"Oh, what can we do today?"
There was a real plan for each day.
But since Francis is a writer
and was a co-writer of the script,
he could create things at the moment,
and if a new idea came up,
he would sit there up all night
and write it.
Then you're gonna get into this
weird speech of, "Fire, fire.
"You demons. You sons of bitches.
"Get away from us.
Get away from this boat.
"Back, you walking dead,
you zombies, you sons of bitches.
"Captain, you made this.
"This is your hell, your nightmare."

I felt that he just thought
a lot of his actors,
we were gems
who were to bring his ideas to life.
And he also took
a lot of our creative input.
Why don't we go,
"You want to kill us all. You're insane.
"You've gone insane.
You're more of a savage.
"You're insane,
savage like those people."
- Or something like that?
- Okay.
You try it, though. "This is your hell."
"This dream is your hell.
This is your nightmare.
"You made it, you liquor-guzzling,
dipsomaniac son of a bitch.
"You bastard! "
Somehow get the idea that you...
You're going mad.
You've gone mad.
Once he set that feel for us,
we just started improvising
everything that was happening
on the boat.
Sampan off the port bow.
Let's take a look.
Lance. Bring them in.
Clean, on the.60. Chef, get a. 16.
Francis had us write up lists of things
that we wanted our characters to do.
I remember we all decided
that we wanted to do
sort of a My Lai Massacre.
We thought an interrogation of a boat
that ended in a firefight
and the loss of many lives.
We wanted to experience
something like that.
- There ain't nothing in here.
- What's in the boxes?
Not a fucking thing.

- Look in that tin can.
- Nothing.
- That rusty can.
- Just fucking rice, that's all!
- There ain't nothing on it!
- Check the yellow can.
Check the yellow can.
She was sitting on it. What's in it?
Chef!

Motherfuckers!

- Hold it!
- Come on, let's kill them all.
- Fucking cocksucking mothers!
- Hold it! Hold it!

Let's kill all the assholes!
Shoot the shit out of all of them.

- Chef, hold it!
- Why not? Jesus Christ.

Why the fuck not?

- Clean?
- I'm good.

See what she was running for?

It's a fucking puppy!

I think what it was that was me
that was Clean was just that I was a kid.

And that's, I think,
what my role is about.

I mean, it's about the kids
that were over there
who didn't know anything
about anything.

They were just kind of snatched up
and used as cannon fodder for this war.

Everyone who has come out here
to the Philippines
seems to be going through something
that is affecting them profoundly,
changing their perspective
about the world or themselves,
while the same thing is happening
to Willard in the course of the film.

Something is definitely
happening to me and to Francis.
Filmmaking, at least for me,

wasn't really just a matter
of writing this little script
and then going and doing it
as you thought that your own life
and your own experience
during the making of it
was also a very strong element,
and that somehow the director works
with more than just having the script
and having the team
of people and actors.

Also, the conditions and the mood
of the company and of each individual
and what personally
people are going through
is also one of
the primary elements of the film.

I mean, what's the matter with you?
You're acting kind of weird.

Hey, you know that last tab of acid
I was saving?

- Yeah.

- I dropped it.

You dropped acid? Far out.

Most of my character was done
under the influence of pot.

We smoked a lot of that.

You know, the film crew
just became our guests upriver with us.

- Did you drop any acid?

- Sure.

- Did you drop any acid during filming?

- Sure.

At Do Luong bridge?

No, I did something else
at Do Luong bridge. I...

I didn't take any acid there.

I did something else.

- What did you do?

- I was doing speed then.

We were working lots of nights,
and I wanted a speedy sort of edge. I...

And marijuana and alcohol...

I mean, we were bad.

We were just bad boys.
Sort of crazy, you know. Slightly mad.
The whole thing was mad, you know.
We felt after a while
we really weren't there.
It was like
we were in a dream or something.
We'd say to Francis,
"I'm not here, Francis.
I'm in Montana with Jack Nicholson."
So they'd say,
"Where are you today, Freddy?"
I'd be in Waco,
I could be in Des Moines...
Wherever I wanted to be.
And you would just go through your day.
You weren't in that place.
...study at the Escoffier School.
That was really crazy, man,
that time in the jungle
with me and Marty and the tiger.
Yeah, that was really...
That was just insane.
We had this guy there with the tiger...
A couple, the trainers.
He had a slight speech impediment.
He had scar tissue,
like, all over his face
where he'd had some bouts
with his tiger, Gambi.
You had a cat that's done that two
or three times, it's no longer worth it.
Because once
they put a hole in your leg...
It's usually on the joint because
it's usually where they're going for,
and you can't walk for a year.
And you don't wanna do it anymore,
so you usually put the cat out
and start over again.
The trainer had, like, a pig on a string,
so the tiger would see him.
Then he was gonna pull him back
to make him jump

at the right angle or something.
So the guy'd come around and say,
"Gambi's very hungry today, Martin.
He's very hungry, Mr. Coppola.
"I'm sure he will do exactly
what you want.
"We haven't fed him in a week."
- Oh, shit.
- Action.
We'd come out there and
Francis'd keep saying, "Get closer."
We're saying, "You get closer, Francis.
You get closer. "
What is it?
Charlie? V.C.?
Tiger!
Man, I've never been so frightened
in my life,
because it was so fast, man.
Guys were running everywhere,
climbing trees.
I gotta remember. Never get out of the boat.
Never get out of the boat!
And to me, that was the essence
of the whole film in Vietnam,
where it was the look
in that tiger's eyes, the madness,
like it didn't matter what you wanted.
There was no reality anymore.
If that tiger wanted you, you were his.
Never get out of the boat.
Absolutely goddamn right.
Unless you were going all the way.
I remember complaining
to Francis one day about my confusion
about all that was going down,
and I said to him,
"I don't know who this guy is.
Who is this Willard?"
And Francis just looked at me
square in the eye and he said,
"He's you. Whoever you are.
"Whatever we're filming at the time,
you are that character."

Francis said he had a dream
a few nights ago
about being on the set
of the Saigon hotel room
with Marty and a Green Beret advisor.
In the dream,
the Green Beret was telling Francis
that what he was doing with Marty
was wrong. It would never be like that.
The Green Beret said
those guys were vain.
The guy would go to the mirror
and admire his beautiful hair
and beautiful mouth.
In Francis' dream, he had Marty
go to the mirror and look at himself,
admire his mouth.
And when he turned around,
Francis could see that Marty
had suddenly turned into Willard.
Francis was going for a moment
where you see
Martin Sheen's dark side,
his primeval being or something...
Some part of him
that would lead you to understand
how this person could
commit an assassination.
At the time of doing that scene,
I was talking in terms of
showing the different levels
of good and evil in yourself.
And I imagined that this guy did things
that nobody had ever seen,
or he'd never talk to anyone,
must still be in him.
And he must have that Kurtzian
other side in him.
Fellows, get ready as soon
as you can, please!
Let's go. Got to reload.
Give us a little boost here!
Okay, fellows, here we go.
They set up this hotel room,

and Marty decided to have a few drinks.
He wasn't drinking at all at the time,
and they rolled the cameras
without telling him what to do.
Fellows, watch your reflections
in the mirror. Here we go.
Yeah, places, everybody.
Five-B, take three, camera A.
Action!

That opening sequence was shot
on my 36th birthday, August 3rd,
and I was so drunk,
I couldn't stand up, frankly.
Marty, go look at yourself in the mirror.
I want you to look
at how beautiful you are.
I want you to look at your mouth,
your mouth and your hair.
You look like a movie star.
Now frighten yourself, Marty.
Show yourself the part that's an animal.
I was so intoxicated, I didn't realize
how close to the mirror I was.
So when I struck it,
I ended up catching my thumb
in the mirror and split it open a bit.
Okay, cut.

Do we have a doctor?
Francis tried to stop it,
and he called for a doctor.
There was a nurse standing by,
and I said, "No, let it go.
"I want to have this out
right here and now."
It had to do with facing
my worst enemy, myself.
I was in a chaotic, spiritual state inside.
Talk to me.
Why did you come back?
Why did you come back?
I fought him like a tiger.
It was real hard for me to reveal myself.
You fucker!
Think about it.

Your wife.
- Your home.
- I...
Your car.
My...
My heart is broken!
God damn it!
The room had been charged
with the possibility
that Marty might lunge at the camera
or attack Francis.
There was an electricity in the room.
Anything could happen.
They were inside somebody,
in his personal territory,
with a man alone
in his most private moment.
I pretended I couldn't remember
a lot of the things I'd done that night.
Actually, I remembered it all.
Dave, give me a hand, would you?
Come on, pal, let's take a shower.
Marty is extremely generous,
big-hearted man.
He's filled with a lot of love,
and...
Much unlike Willard.
And so, when you ask Marty
to examine the darker nature
of this character,
it meant closing himself down a lot
and becoming very inward,
in order to find the killer
who could carry out the task
and terminate Kurtz.
I think it was...
Willard was definitely responsible
for Marty's own breakdown.
March 1, 1977.

Last night at 2:

Marty Sheen experienced
severe chest pains.
At daybreak, he crawled out of his room

and down to the local highway,
where he was picked up
by a public bus.
After being taken
to the production office,
he was rushed to the hospital.
Marty, it turned out,
had suffered a serious heart attack.
He received last rites from a priest
who did not speak English.
I really had a very close call
and I realized...
It's nothing that I can put into words.
I just knew that if I wanted to live,
it was my choice.
If I wanted to die,
that was my choice, too.
There wasn't even any fear.
The fear only came when I realized later
how close I came to the end.
That's when I got scared.
I remember the phone ringing,
and my secretary said,
"Marty's had a heart attack,
and Francis doesn't want to admit it."
Dave Salvin let Melissa
tell Barry Hirsch
that Marty had a heart attack!
What the fuck is that?
What the fuck is that?
You know that it's gonna be
all over Hollywood in a half an hour?
If Marty is so seriously stricken,
then he must go back.
Of course he will go back,
and we'll eat it,
but when I talked to the doctor,
they didn't know.
Marty's a young man.
He probably would be able
to be up and about in three weeks.
I said, "Could he do non-strenuous work
"such as just close-ups,
sitting and acting?"

He said, "Possibly, yes. "

That's all I need to hear from the doctor.

So what's going on in fucking
trade winds is fucking gossip.
Gossip.

That gossip can finish me off.

If UA hears that it's eight weeks,
UA with a \$27 million negative
is gonna force me
to complete it with what I've got,
- and I don't have the movie yet.
- Right.
- All right, now, you understand exactly?
- Yes.

If Marty dies, I wanna hear
that everything's okay,
until I say, "Marty is dead. "

- You got it?
- Right.

If it's not done, man,
ship the whole office out of here.

- You know what I'm saying?
- Yes.

Okay, I'm really scared, guys.
The first time
I've been scared on this movie.
Whenever Francis gets in trouble
on a picture, and not sure...
The thing is to keep going,
which I respect and admire.
You gotta keep moving forward.
'Cause, I mean, of course,
the guy had mortgaged his home
and everything else
to be able to make this movie.
We shot masters of scenes.
A lot of that material we shot
with a double over Marty's shoulder.
Then we went back when he came back
and shot the close-ups.
So we had to find work
for the shooting unit
for as long as it was gonna take
to get Marty back.

Okay...

I'll shoot anything.

Tell me something I can shoot.

We're out of little pickups to shoot.

I'll shoot the transition to medevac.

Or I'll do a take of this.

I'll shoot anything.

Give me a break.

What did I accomplish today?

You found out, number one,

that we're going to have

a tremendous problem

without Marty with these scenes.

We knew we were gonna have to

at least open one major scene

without Marty.

I knew that a lot.

I told you we could get through

three weeks or four weeks maybe,

but after that, we were in trouble.

We both knew it.

All I'm saying is, from my point of view,

I'd like to do something.

I feel like I'm this Peck's Bad Boy

who's, like, being unreasonable.

Can I have a club soda?

- Club soda department?

- Yeah.

Who knows

what Francis had put together?

And they brought me back

to put the script back together,

and everybody said,

"Thank God! He's returned to reason!

"Thank God! This will be all right now!

This is a new day!

"This thing will finally be released."

They said, "Go in there and tell him

that he's been crazy."

And all this kind of stuff.

I felt like von Rundstedt

going to see Hitler in 1944,

and I was gonna be telling him

there was no more gasoline

on the eastern front,
and the whole thing was going to fold.
And I came out an hour-and-a-half later,
and he had convinced me
that this was the first film
that would win a Nobel Prize, you know.
And so I came out of the room
like von Rundstedt,
"We can win!
"We don't need gasoline! "
He had completely turned me around.
I would have done anything.
April 19th, 1977.
This is Marty's first day back on the set.
He arrived about an hour ago.
He looks tan and terrific,
just like he came back
from Palm Beach.
Francis put his ear on Marty's chest
to check him out.
He said he looked too good.
Part of me was afraid of what I would find
and what I would do when I got there.
I knew the risks, or imagined I knew.
But the thing I felt the most,
much stronger than fear,
was the desire to confront him.
What I have to arrive at in my mind
is Willard's state of mind
when he arrives at the compound.
He could either arrive incredibly angry
or like a newborn baby.
And I think what he should find
at the end is death.
That at the end of this whole thing,
there is a frightening...
A frightening place
that just smells of death.
In the script,
Kurtz has trained a tribe of local
Montagnard Indians as his private army.
Rather than dress up Filipino extras
everyday,
Francis has recruited

a tribe of lfugao Indians
from the mountains to the north.
There is a rumor on the set that,
until recently,
the lfugao were practicing headhunters.
Last Saturday, they had a feast.
The old men of the tribe
sat in the priest's house and chanted.
I wanted to film the ceremony,
so their mayor asked permission for me
to shoot.
I was told if I entered, I could not leave
during the first set of chants.
I was interested in documenting,
photographing the actual ritual
that they performed.
They began at night,
inside their hut up on stilts,
and they drank a lot of rice wine
and chanted,
and they told a long story
in their own language.
This went on during the night.
The next morning, they began to kill
some chickens and look at their bile
and tell the fortune of the tribe.
And then they killed some pigs
in a very sacrificial way.
By this time,
I felt that there was something
very profound and moving
about this experience,
so I ran back to the house
to get Francis,
and I said,
"You know, you've got to see this,
"because they're going to kill a caribou."
He was writing
and didn't really wanna come,
but I really encouraged him
to come back to the location.
And we got back there
just maybe 10 minutes
before they killed this caribou

in this ritual way.
The caribou was standing there,
and they just seemed to come out
from nowhere
and just kill it very quickly
with these big machetes,
and it fell to the ground.
There was something very beautiful
and strong and profound
about these people
who killed this animal,
and then they all ate it at a festival,
kind of like Thanksgiving.
As Francis and I
were getting ready to leave,
the mayor asked
if we would do the priest
the honor of accepting
the best part of the caribou
that is usually reserved for him,
the heart.
We thanked him.
Through a translator,
he said that he would like his picture
taken with Francis.
I took a photograph
of the two priests and Francis
standing there together.
It was enough like people in war
who get set up like little tribal chieftains
to stimulate the imagination
along those lines.
A film director is kind of one of
the last truly dictatorial posts left
in a world
getting more and more democratic.
So that, plus being
in a distant, Oriental country,
the fact that pretty much
it was my own money
and that I was making it on the crest
of the acclaim of the Godfather films,
you know, I was wealthy,
did contribute to a state of mind

that was like Kurtz.
What did they tell you?
They told me that you had gone
totally insane,
and that your methods were unsound.
Are my methods unsound?
I don't see any method at all, sir.
Thirty-eight takes
and Francis said the scene
was never the way he wanted it.
The people who were
playing the severed heads
sat in their boxes buried in the ground

from 8:

till 6:

All day they were there in the hot sun
with smoke blowing on them.
Between takes,
they were covered with umbrellas.
It's nice because this is the moment
when Chief dies,
that he looks up
and sees this harlequin figure
waving all the people away.
He sees, essentially, Dennis Hopper.
Know what I mean?
Zap them with your siren, man.
Zap them with your siren.
I have Dennis Hopper playing
a spaced-out photojournalist
with 12 cameras who's here
because he's gonna get the truth,
and it's all, "Man!" You know?
And he's a wonderful apparition.
I'm an American. Yeah.
An American civilian. Hi, Yanks.
Hi, American.
I didn't know till two weeks
before I came in
I was even going to be in the picture,
much less play the photojournalist guy
in tatters and rags, taking photographs,

trying to explain what this was all about
and how it's blowing his mind away.
I was not in the greatest of shape,
you know,
as far as, like,
my career was concerned,
and it was delightful to hear that
I was gonna go do anything anywhere.
And I really appreciate Francis' writing,
even though he does
drop it on you sometimes,
and it does take you sometimes,
an idiot like me, a whole day to learn it.
Why didn't you say that
to him in the scene?

- Who?

- Something clever like that.

When he says, "Who are you?"

Why didn't you say, "Who are you?"

- Because I haven't learned my lines yet.

- I know. You've had them for five days!

- The other thing I'd like to say is that...

- Those glasses...

These glasses,

I can't see anything through them.

But, like, every crack

represents a life I've saved.

You know what I mean?

They represent a life I've saved.

Say all that in the scene.

I do, but you see, the director says,

"You don't know your lines."

Well, if you know your lines,

then you can forget them.

You can know, more or less...

Oh, I see,

but that's what I'm trying to do.

Forget those lines.

No, but it's not fair to forget them

if you never knew them.

I'm not gonna help you.

You're gonna help him, man.

You're gonna help him.

I mean, what are they gonna say,

man, when he's gone, huh?
'Cause he dies when it dies, man.
When it dies, he dies.
What are they gonna say about him?
What are they gonna say?
"He was a kind man. He was a wise man.
"He had plans. He had wisdom."
Bullshit, man!
Am I gonna be the one that's gonna
set them straight? Look at me. Wrong!
You.
For years, Francis has dreamed
of a group of poets,
filmmakers and writers
who would come together
to form American Zoetrope.
This morning I realized that this was it,
right here in the heart of the jungle.
When you stop looking for something,
you see it right in front of you.
I'm not disclosing any trade secrets,
but I want you to understand now
that Mr. Kurtz had taken a high seat
amongst the devils of the land.
I mean, literally.
A group of natives appeared
bearing a stretcher.
I looked down on the long,
gaunt figure of Kurtz,
the hollow cage of his ribs,
a bald skeleton head, like an ivory ball.
What did you do
with Marlon Brando when he arrived?
Well, he was already heavy
when I'd hired him,
and he promised me
that he was gonna get in shape.
And I imagined if he were heavy,
I could use that.
But he was so fat,
he was very, very shy about it.
Immediately when I saw him, I said,
"Well, I'll write this as a man
"who really, you know,

had indulged every aspect of himself. "

So he was fat, and he had
two or three tribal girls with him
and was eating mangoes
and kind of go the other way.
And he was very, very adamant
that he didn't wanna portray himself
that way.

I mean, clearly, he had just,
kind of, left me in a tough spot.
The clock was ticking on this deal
he had.

We had to finish him
within three weeks,
or we'd go into
a very expensive overage.

So the whole company was sitting up
on the set, around the camera,
the crew all poised to go and shoot,
and Francis and Marlon
would be talking about the character.
And whole days would go by.
And this is at Marlon's urging,
and yet, he's getting paid for it.

One of the things
Francis said to Marlon in the beginning,
"Read Heart of Darkness.
This is what we're going for. "

And Marlon really worked hours
with Francis,
trying to develop the dialogue
and develop what it was that
he said in these circumstances.
And, of course, after Francis
had some dialogs with him,
he realized that Marlon
had never read Heart of Darkness,
and it was a complete shock.

Marlon's basic notes,
as I understood them,
as I just glanced at them,
were all motivation things.
In other words, it's like getting in
to saying, "Why is he going on a boat?"

And I can't answer them,
because it's too late for me
to change the structure.
So what I really need from him
are the facts about who he is.
And in a way, I don't even care.
Is he a fat guy who's got his shirt off
and starting to wear necklaces?
Or is he bulging,
is his uniform bulging at the buttons?
But I know that this guy's
a fucking traitor...
You don't let me talk to you.
See, my problem is not only
I have to come up with a scene,
but it's gotta have the right shape
to fit in the jigsaw puzzle.
Maybe I ought to get Dennis Hopper
in this scene,
so it's just not with two characters.
- You know.
- No, I don't know, Francis.
You know, I don't. Nobody's told me.
I mean, I have been afraid
to even put Dennis Hopper
and Marlon together
'cause, Christ, I haven't figured out
what Marty's going to do with Marlon.
What happens if I got crazy
Dennis Hopper in there?
- I know nothing.
- I'll tell you.
- But you don't let me tell you.
- Oh, I see.
Kurtz found out that he was an assassin
who was sent to kill him.
- I know that. I have that information.
- Yeah.
Okay, that's what I'm saying.
Okay, just do what I ask.
When I say you just explain the poem
and the reason you're explaining is...
But, you see, I need to know reasons.
I'm telling you the reason.

I can't ever talk more
than a fucking sentence!
The reason that you're
explaining the poem to him
is because you want to indicate
to this guy
that he does not understand Kurtz,
that Kurtz is a strange man.
What you're trying to express
is that he's, kind of, in the twilight zone,
that his twilight zone
is our twilight zone.
It's America's twilight zone.
So that he will not judge him.
So that he will accept him
as a great man and help him.
Okay, man.
There's no good, right, wrong, bad.
One through nine and back to one.
No fractions, no maybes, no supposes.
You can't travel in space.
You can't go out into space, you know,
without like... With fractions.
What are you gonna land on?
One-quarter? Three-eighths?
What are you gonna do when you go
from here to Venus or something?
That's dialectic physics, okay?
Dialectic logic is,
"There's only love and hate."
You either love somebody
or you hate them.
Mutt!
You mutt.
So what I should do...
What I should do is just shoot for
the next three weeks irrationally.
In other words,
if I did an improvisation every day
between Marlon Brando
and Marty Sheen,
would I, at that time, have more magical
and, in a way, telling moments
than if I just closed down

for three weeks
and write a structure that then they act?
And the answer would be
I'm much better off
to do an improvisation everyday.
Two-sixty, take 3.
What is the blood lust?
The blood lust...
The blood lust,
they say,
all the men that I've read about,
they say that the human animal
is the only one that has blood lust.
Killing without purpose.
Killing for pleasure.
You can see light through this.
You take the ones
that are made for garbage detail.
You take the others who are
made to think, but who can't act.
You take...
I swallowed a bug.
It's irresistible
when a bee discovers honey.
He's irresistibly driven...
My... My friend laughs.
He's my critic.
My only critic perhaps,
outside of myself.
I mean, in a way, I'm like on a room
with all the floors covered with Vaseline
and all these new elements
are coming at me.
And I'm trying to go ahead,
but now I've got Marlon Brando
as an incredible joker to play.
And he's like a force of his own
'cause he don't give a shit.
I want a character
of a monumental nature
who is struggling
with the extremities of his soul
and is struggling with them
on such a level

that you're in awe of it
and is destroyed by them.
It takes bravery.
The deepest bullets
are not to be feared.
Phosphorous, napalm
are nothing to be feared,
but to look inward, to see that twisted
mind that lies beneath
the surface of all humans
and to say, "Yes, I accept you.
"I even love you
because you're a part of me.
"You're an extension of me."
- What?
- Can you walk now?
Why are we in Vietnam?
It's our time to grab
this moment in history.
It's our time to...
- To teach.
- Microphone.
I can't think of anymore dialogue to say.
And I am feeling like an idiot
having set in motion stuff
that doesn't make any sense,
that doesn't match,
and yet I am doing it.
And the reason I'm doing it
is out of desperation,
'cause I have no rational way to do it.
What I have to admit is
that I don't know what I'm doing.
Well, how do you account
for the discrepancy
between what you feel about it
and what everybody else
who see it feels?
Because they see the magic
of what has happened before.
I'm saying, "Hey, it's not gonna happen!
I don't have any performances.
"The script doesn't make sense.
I have no ending. "

I'm like a voice crying out, saying,
"Please, it's not working!
Somebody get me off this."
And nobody listens to me!
Everyone says, "Yes, well,
Francis works best in a crisis."
I'm saying, "This is one crisis
I'm not gonna pull myself out of!"
I'm making a bad movie.
So why should I go ahead? I'd rather...
I'm gonna be bankrupt anyway.
Why can't I just have the courage
to say, "It's no good"?
There's almost anything I'd do
to get out of it.
I'm already thinking about
what kind of sickness I can get.
I'm in the rain on the platform
thinking if I just moved a little,
I'd just fall 30 feet.
It might kill me,
but it might paralyze me or something.
It'd be a graceful way out.
Did you ever fear for his sanity?
Well, he did, at one point,
he fainted, kind of...
He had a collapse.
And he told me
that he could see himself
going down a dark tunnel,
and he didn't know
if he was dying or leaving this reality
or what was happening to him.
But he'd gone to the threshold,
maybe, of his sanity or something.
It was scary, but also
kind of exhilarating or thrilling
that he would take such risks
with himself
in his experience to go that far.
And I think this film
was all about risking,
risking your money,
risking your sanity,

risking how far you could
press your family members...
I mean, everything that he did,
he went to the extremes
to test those fringe regions
and then come back.
Nothing is so terrible
as a pretentious movie.
I mean, a movie that aspires
for something really terrific
and doesn't pull it off is shit, it's scum,
and everyone will walk on it as such.
And that's what poor filmmakers,
in a way, that's their greatest horror,
is to be pretentious.
So here you are, on one hand,
trying to aspire to really do something,
on the other hand,
you're not allowed to be pretentious.
And finally you say, "Fuck it! I don't care
if I'm pretentious or not pretentious,
"or if I've done it or I haven't done it."
All I know is that
I am going to see this movie,
and that, for me,
it has to have some answers.
And by "answers, "
I don't mean just a punch line.
Answers on about 47 different levels.
It's very hard to talk about
these things without being very corny.
You use a word like
self-purgation or epiphany,
they think
you're either a religious weirdo
or, you know,
an asshole college professor.
But those are the words for the process,
this transmutation,
this renaissance, this rebirth,
which is the basis of all life.
The one rule that all man,
from the time
they first were walking around,

looking up at the sun,
scratching around for food
and an animal to kill,
the first concept that,
I feel, got into their head
was the idea of life and death.
That the sun went down
and the sun went up.
That the crop, when they learned
how to make a crop, it died.
In the winter, everything died.
The first man, he must have thought,
"Oh, my God, it's the end of the world! "
And then all of a sudden,
there was spring,
and everything came alive,
and it was better!
I mean, after all, look at Vietnam.
Look at my movie.
You'll see what I'm talking.
The horror.
The river, sleepless,
crowded with memories
of men and ships,
hunters for gold and pursuers of fame.
What greatness has not flowed
on the ebb of that river
into the mystery of an unknown earth?
The dreams of men,
the seed of commonwealths,
the germs of empires.
The river is black tonight, my friends.
Look, it seems to lead into the heart
of an immense darkness.
To me, the great hope
is that now these little eight-millimeter
video recorders
and stuff are coming out,
some people who normally
wouldn't make movies
are gonna be making them.
And, you know, suddenly, one day,
some little fat girl in Ohio
is gonna be the new Mozart

and make a beautiful film
with her little father's camcorder.
And, for once, the so-called
professionalism about movies
will be destroyed forever, you know,
and it will really become an art form.
That's my opinion.