

Opening Scene to *Apocalypse Now*

All of the following are designed to reinforce the ideas of alienation (from self and others), the “turning upside down” of expectations (black becomes good, white becomes bad, the moral becomes immoral, etc), violence, and the nature of conflict between the destroyer and the destroyed.

- The sound of the helicopter blades occurs before the actual images begin
- The sound of the blades is distorted: slowed down and echoed
- Large shadows cross in front of camera and you are unable to see clearly what it is
- Dust/Napalm gasses rises and obscures scene
- Image of peaceful forest/jungle contrasted with the violence of dropping Napalm
- Explosion of forest occurs simultaneously with the line from the song “This is the end”
- Pan shot of destruction and destructors (helicopters) to provide scope
- As pan finishes, overlay of Willard’s (Marlowe’s) face over images of destruction
- His face is shown upside down because his world has been, in a sense, turned upside down; this occurs simultaneously with the line “the end / No safety or surprise”
- Closes eyes on the line “I’ll never look into your eyes again;” cliché of eyes are windows to the soul, duh!
- Inhales on cigarettes with the underlay of the forests burning; ummm...parallelism: one life is bleeding into another
- Face of “primitive” statue to the right side of frame suggests observation; occurs with the line “desperately in need...of some...stranger’s hand.”
- Fan blades merge with the helicopters (visual)
- Left bottom corner remains in flames. Cannot escape the destruction; it remains with him
- Pan across screen with ways of escape: cigarettes, alcohol, drugs (spoon for liquefying heroin), gun. Occurs immediately after the line “Lost in a roman...wilderness of pain.” The gun, of course, is the final solution for alienation from self.
- Contrast of white sheets, black gun. Lyrics repeat “all the children are insane / All the children are insane” as gun comes into focus. Notice the use of pan shot; things become more clear as the scene progresses.
- Merging of helicopter with fan (sounds)
- The 1st clear shot (no overlay) after the opening is Willard’s eyes open and staring at the audience

Lyrics from “The End”¹
Jim Morrison

This is the end
Beautiful friend
This is the end
My only friend, the end

Of our elaborate plans, the end
Of everything that stands, **the end**
No safety or surprise, the end
I’ll never look into your eyes...again

Can you picture what will be
So limitless and free
Desperately in need...of some...stranger's hand
In a...desperate land

Lost in a Roman...wilderness of pain
And all the children are insane
All the children are insane
Waiting for the summer rain, yeah

¹ Lyrics in **bold** are referenced in the above analysis