"Platoon" is flawed by mythical and stereotypical characters

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The director and writer, Oliver Stone, has been promoting his film as the third part of the cycle of Vietnam films. He holds that the cycle began with those films which raised the Vietnam experience to a mythical level ("Deer Hunter" and "Apocalypse Now"), followed by the won-the-war Vietnam films (Stallone, Schwarzenegger, and Chuck Norris films), and now finally followed by realistic films about the war.

But if Stone thinks that "Platoon" is realistic and truthful in every aspect then he is mistaken in several respects. In calling memories of his own comrades and superiors, Stone has so removed the individuality of his major characters that he has in fact simply reused the stereotypes that we have seen in films before. In so doing, he has created his own myths in ways more subtle than the Vietnam films of the first cycle.

The stereotypes of cowardly Lieutenant who has lost control of his troops (a character that can also be seen in "Heartbreak Ridge"), of hard-boiled Sergeant who takes control of the troops and will do anything — moral or immoral — to vanquish the enemy (seen chasing by a swarm of the enemy as he is mistaken) are too stereotypical to be believable, and realism to "Platoon" than I had seen in the other films about the Vietnam conflict, but these were not enough to sway me into believing that "Platoon" was better than any other movie I had seen during 1986.

"Platoon" is an excellent film — it will make you depressed and worried about what happened in Vietnam. But the film is not without its faults and no matter how "Platoon" may be, it cannot make up for these.

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