

The Descent into Darkness: Recognising
Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in
Ubisoft's *Far Cry 2*.

Richard van der Klooster

3938573

Undergraduate Thesis English Language and Culture

Utrecht University

Supervisor: dr. Supheert

October 2017

British English

6572 words

Table of Contents

General Introduction	3
Conrad in Context: Imperialism, Narratology and Video Game Adaptation	6
In Search of Kurtz: Finding Symbolical meaning of Kurtz in Ubisoft's <i>Far Cry 2</i>	11
The Path to Darkness: Setting and Atmosphere in <i>Heart of Darkness</i> and <i>Far Cry 2</i>	18
Conclusion	23
Works Cited	25
Appendix	27

General Introduction

Games are a relatively new medium and their potential for serious, literary content has for a long time remained relatively unacknowledged among scholars. In his article “What Computer Games Can and Can't Do,” Jesper Juul offers a possible explanation: “I think it is safe to say that the humanities have completely ignored games and focused on, privileged if you will, narratives and fixed sequences. Games have been ignored, to a large extent, I think, because they are sending the wrong signals. To an educated person, literally alien signals of low culture, fun and insignificance.” However, the gaming industry has seen exponential growth in the past decades and the scope of its content is far from restricted to the destruction of cars and the chopping off of heads. One of the chief promoters of gaming as a serious medium was Ian Bogost, who claimed they have a “unique persuasive power” (viii). Since then, scholars and institutions have slowly started to recognize the potential of the medium and many institutions have running projects in the field of Game Research. One of such projects is called “Persuasive gaming in Context: From theory-based design to validation and back,” led by Prof.dr. Joost Raessens. However, most of these studies and projects are focussed on applied games: games designed to be educational or persuasive and less on games as an actual form of literature. Although games are seen as an important medium in the field of adaptation studies, many games with direct reference or connection to world-renowned novels still remain unresearched. One of such games is Ubisoft’s *Far Cry 2*. *Far Cry 2* is an open-world first-person shooter game, published by the French studio Ubisoft on 21 October 2008 and developed by their Canadian branch Ubisoft Montreal. In

an open-world game players can move within the bounds of the game with complete freedom. *Far Cry 2* has sold over three million copies (VGChartz) and was met with an abundance of positivity from critics, being credited with an 8.9 and an 8.5 by IGN and Gamespot respectively (IGN, Gamespot.com). Although the game features direct references to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the only article investigating the connection between the two works is by L.B. Jeffries entitled: "*Far Cry 2: The Heart of Darkness Game.*"

Far Cry 2 takes place in a war-torn country in Africa. The objective of the game is for the player to fight his/her way through the jungle and venture into a place called "heart of darkness" to assassinate a notorious arms dealer named the Jackal. Through a series of fragments in the form of tape recordings, scattered throughout the country, players get insight into the mind of Jackal, revealing the path that led to his corruption. The game presents players with a set of problems that challenge their psyche. Plagued by malaria and the horrors of the location, players are forced onto a dark path which they have to negotiate to survive both the illness and the dangers of the location. Players in *Far Cry 2* have to descend into darkness in an attempt to purge the country of an even greater darkness. These psychological effects and the development of both the player and the game's characters can be compared to the development of the characters in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, like Kurtz and Marlow, whose actions and psychological development are also strongly influenced by the setting and the effects of the horror of the location on the psyche.

Far Cry 2 can be seen as an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, even though the plot and narrative of *Far Cry 2* differ greatly from Conrad's novel. The game is an adaptation in terms of setting, symbolism, character and atmosphere. The fact that there is

an actual location within the game named “Heart of Darkness” makes the connection explicit. Because of the explicit reference and the identified parallels, more investigation is warranted, not only from the point of view of adaptation studies but also because no scholarly research has been done into the game so far. It is also interesting to discover how 19th century themes can, or cannot, be adapted into a game set in the 21st century. The present paper will therefore focus on identifying the parallels between Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Ubisoft’s video game *Far Cry 2*. The first section of the paper will give theoretic context on key themes in Conrad’s novel and on narratology and gaming as a medium. In the second chapter, the analysis will revolve around the character of Kurtz from *Heart of Darkness* and the ways in which the symbolism and analogies surrounding him and other characters are adapted into *Far Cry 2*. The third section will focus on setting and atmosphere in *Heart of Darkness* and *Far Cry 2* and will identify how these elements can help understand the psychological development of characters and players. The paper will conclude with a summary of the findings and suggestions for further research.

Conrad in Context: Imperialism, Narratology and Video Game Adaptation

When we identify with a character in a movie or a book, or imagine we are in the same room as the protagonist, we have no way of altering the course of events; no way of exerting agency. Likewise, the environments and characters represented in these media have no way of reacting to our presence, no matter how strongly we identify with them. (Calleja 88)

One of the most striking aspects of the comparison between Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Ubisoft's *Far Cry 2* is the medium. Conrad's novel and its adaptations, like for instance Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, have been studied intensely. *Heart of Darkness* in video games, however, is an almost completely undiscovered universe. Video games offer something that few other media can offer: Interactivity. This interactivity has often been described as one of the biggest hurdles preventing a direct comparison of video games to written sources. In "What Computer Games Can and Can't Do," Jesper Juuls explains the primary problem of interactivity: "One of the traits of narration is that narration is about something that happened at some other time. This is the whole story/discourse dichotomy, which is something you want to avoid in any real-time interactive product." What Juuls points to here is the idea that a novel is a story that has already taken place, a story that is then recounted to a reader with no prior knowledge of the facts. Video Games, however, are dynamic by nature and although there often are some fixed points in the story, the main premise of a game is generally that the player is in control, allowing for the creation of a unique experience for each individual player. Teun Dubbelman contributed to this discussion by identifying two different types of narratives: representational and presentational. He

identifies static, recounted stories as the representational approach to narrative, which he contrasts with stories that place the audience, reader or player in an active role, giving them “the illusion of being physically grounded to one specific location in space and time” (38). One might assume, then, that interactivity would only be possible in works in the presentational form, but Dubbelman argues that both presentational and representational forms of narrative can be interactive. Written, Representational novels and films, however, can never be interactive, as the stories unfolds in a fixed sequence, which is why game adaptations of novels have such a unique element in the form of interactivity.

Many forms of interactivity exist and the type of interactivity can help determine the possibilities of the narrative and the plot and the characters. Being able to change the fate of the world is a different kind of interactivity than being able to choose what clothes a character wears, or which guns he or she uses. In her article “Beyond Myth and Metaphor: The Case of Narrative in Digital Media,” Marie-Laure Ryan investigates different types of interactivity and identifies four categories that help understand the way a game works and the effect it has on narrative. She argues that interactivity is always a combination of two categories, each with two different options, totalling a total of four different types of interactivity. According to Ryan, the interactive aspect of games is either external or internal, external meaning that the user is able to affect the world from the outside as a god-like figure, while users with internal interactivity take the position of a character that participates in the fictional world. The second set of categories are exploratory and ontological interactivity. Worlds featuring exploratory interactivity allow for a free exploration, but do not allow for any control over the outcome of the story, which ontological activity does

allow for. Although Ryan does not mention this specific game, *Far Cry 2* clearly features internal-ontological interactivity, as players have direct agency and have the power to choose to let characters die and alter the direction of the plot. Internal-ontological interactivity is arguably the most fitting option for a game adaptation, as it introduces multiple possibilities for the game's plot and allows a player's actions to shape the world they are in, introducing morality and resulting in a more immersive experience. Gordon Calleja explains the immersion in an explicit example: "There is a distinction that needs to be made between holding mental images of a scene in mind while imagining being present within that scene, and occupying a location within a computer generated environment that anchors users with regards to other agents and enables them to interact with the environment from that specific location" (88).

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon proposes a potential limitation of the medium: "What video games, like virtual reality experiments, cannot easily adapt is what novels can portray so well: the 'res cogitans,' the space of the mind. Even screen and stage media have a difficulty with this dimension, because when psychic reality is shown, rather than told about, it has to be made manifest in the material realm to be perceived by the audience" (14). It could be argued, however, that the psychic reality of *Far Cry 2* is similar to that of *Heart of Darkness*, and that it is not shown, but rather experienced. Although the horrors of the location are shown as well, players in *Far Cry 2* face constant psychological strain impacting their decisions and experiences. When reading a novel, a reader is transported into an interpretation of the story in the imagination of the reader; the story is always the same, but the images differ from reader to reader. In video games such as *Far Cry*

2, a player is virtually transported into a world that can freely be discovered: “what gets adapted here is a heterocosm, literally another world or cosmos, complete, of course, with the stuff of a story – settings, characters, events, and situations (Hutcheon 14). Even if it is through an illusion, psychologically experiencing the effects of the horrors of the African jungle on the psyche could possibly lead to a more profound realization of those horrors for some players than reading a very compelling written portrayal of those horrors would. In this way, the video games medium may offer a unique insight into the psychological reality of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

Imperialism and postcolonialism are intrinsic points of interest when analysing the relation of any kind of work to *Heart of Darkness*. Although *Far Cry 2*, taking place in 2008, does not portray a world of direct imperialistic dominance and slavery, the game does take place in Africa and traces of imperialism are obviously apparent. In the case of *Heart of Darkness*, imperialism is a double-edged sword and has been received both positively and negatively. In his article “Cultural Psychosis on the Frontier: The Work of the Darkness in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” Tony Brown explains the function of Marlow’s reflection on the evils of the West: “*Heart of Darkness* has commonly been seen to present a subversive perspective through Marlow's perversion of the West's image of itself as the place of light and civilization” (15). The perversion of the West’s image is achieved, for instance, when Marlow describes Brussels as a “whited sepulchre”, alluding to the possible corrupted inner working of the West that is shrouded behind a coating of white (69). The perversion of the West’s image is also achieved through Marlow’s comments on conquest: “I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago [. . .]

darkness was here yesterday (64),” which is followed by a direct condemnation of colonialism, just a page later: “The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look at it too much”(65). Brown also comments on the other edge of the blade, the one thing that the realization of our past sins does not change:

What occurs in Marlow's viewing of the Western metropolis through "the veil of the colonial fantasm" is what might be called a "metonymy of the veil," as one fantasy (Western metropolis as civilized place of light) is displaced by another (Western metropolis as horrific place of darkness). While this might correctly recognize the perversion of the West's ideal self-image, it ignores what must remain the constant repetition of Africa as the primal seat of darkness: in Marlow's perverse or ironic presentation of Europe qua the darkness, he must still uphold, as it were, the first term (i.e., Africa as darkness). So while Marlow effectively questions the West's self-image, he maintains, at every point, the West's image of Africa as a negative space of darkness. (15-16)

In her article “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” Chinua Achebe provides a similar argument, but she goes as far as to say that the dark portrayal of Africa can be seen as part of a recurring image in racist discourse. Although the depiction of Africa is dark, it is hard to imagine that *Heart of Darkness* would have had the same impact if the portrayal of Africa was significantly more positive. Because *Heart of Darkness* convinces readers that the West is one of the primary causes of the horror in Africa, the darkness of Africa directly correlates to the darkness of the West. A more positive depiction of Africa could have interrupted the recurring image that Achebe and Brown signify, but it could have weakened the crucial way that it reflects on the West.

In Search of Kurtz: Finding Symbolical meaning of Kurtz in Ubisoft's *Far Cry 2*

Kurtz is a critical point of focus in much research on *Heart of Darkness*. Although it is through Marlow's eyes that the reader experiences the journey and the more direct anti-imperialistic notions, such as the direct critique of the roman conquest looked at in the previous section, it is Kurtz, and Marlow's view of him, that are central to the unravelling of the reflective aspect that helps him to understand Kurtz's corruption, but also helps reflect on Western ideals and practices through Marlow's experience and the deeper symbolic meaning behind the darkness and corruption and its origins. Because of this, Kurtz, or another character adapted to his likeness, tends to play a central role in *Heart of Darkness* adaptations. This is, for instance, the case for the 1979 film adaptation *Apocalypse Now*, where the protagonist has to find and kill a deserted military officer named Colonel Kurtz, and, as it turns out, it is also true for Ubisoft's *Far Cry 2*.

The main antagonist in *Far Cry 2* is called Jackal (*See figure 1*). Jackal is a notorious arms dealer who fuels both sides of a raging civil war. It does not take long for him to present himself as a Kurtz-like figure; within the first ten minutes of gameplay, the player already encounters Jackal for the first time. The player wakes up in a hospital bed after passing out with malaria and too ill to move. Jackal, the man the player is sent to assassinate, stands over the player's bed with a knife in his hand. After reading some of the documents in the player's briefcase, he speaks to the player: "Well that didn't work out the way they planned - I'm still breathing and you're the one with malaria. You can tell them you tried,

but that means fuck all, doesn't it? You're fired. You know it, and so do I. You had your shot, but now it's over. - And since men like you only work for money, you're no longer my problem." Jackal continues to explain his motives by quoting Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*: "A living being seeks above all else to discharge its strength. Life itself is will to power, nothing else matters" (16). With this, the first impression of Jackal as a Kurtz-like character has been presented. Both Kurtz and Jackal can be seen as the embodiment of Nietzsche's "Will to power." For Kurtz, this becomes most apparent through his ideals: "Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for ... humanizing, improving, instructing" (96). Jackal also often displays his hunger for power: "They can't kill me, I decide who lives and dies." Nietzsche and Conrad have often been connected and many scholars, like Goonetilleke and Aschheim, have argued that Kurtz was heavily influenced by Nietzschean philosophies. What becomes clear is that both Jackal and Kurtz are hungry for power and that this hunger plays an important role in their corruption. What Ivory is for Kurtz, weapons are for Jackal. Both are symbols of wealth and power and both contribute to the suffering and decay of the African countries they operate in.

A second way in which Jackal can be compared to Kurtz is in the discovery of the character through a series of fragmented pieces of information. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow's slow, fragmented discovery of Kurtz helps to build the mystique and tension surrounding Kurtz and builds Marlow's interest in his discovery. This becomes clear, for instance, when Marlow asks: "Tell me pray, said I, 'who is this Mr Kurtz?'" The agent answers: "He is a prodigy" "He is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else" (87). Through these fragments of information, Kurtz's image of an

immensely gifted and talented man is slowly realised and Marlow's sympathetic identification with Kurtz becomes stronger. Ultimately, the image of Kurtz, unlike Marlow's sympathy for the man, is shattered: "at the end of his quest Marlow does not find what he had expected all along, a good man in the midst of darkness and corruption" (Thale 352). The discovery of Jackal in *Far Cry 2* is developed similarly. Throughout the world of *Far Cry 2*, parts of an interview with Jackal can be found. These fragments, in the form of tape recordings scattered through the game, offer a unique insight into the mind of Jackal (*See figure 2*). These tape recordings contain Jackal's views on morality, the west and the motives behind his gun trade. The fragments are in many ways similar to the dossier on Colonel Kurtz in *Apocalypse Now*. The dossier containing photos and a letter from Colonel Kurtz's wife are revealed in the film with the help of a voice over. *Apocalypse Now* also features tape recordings of Colonel Kurtz, which are very similar to those in *Far Cry 2*, except Willard hears the tapes before ever reaching the antagonist. The scattered tape recordings in *Far Cry 2* help the player to identify and possibly even sympathise with Jackal, and help to establish Jackal not only as purely evil, but also as a once good man, corrupted by greed, just as the fragmented discovery of Kurtz does for Marlow. Kurtz's idealism of efficient imperialism seems to clash with the inefficiency of his brutality. Violence for Kurtz becomes a means to a much more important end, and reason and empathy get eclipsed by passion. John Noyes identifies Kurtz's flaw as "the spectre of human failure that haunted late-nineteenth-century man" (112).

Players in *Far Cry 2* face the same existential crisis as Marlow. They recognize the horror of Jackal's actions, but at the same time something makes them want to discover

more about his person. Although the gradual discovery of a character is a frequently used device in story-telling, the way that it is done in *Heart of Darkness*, *Apocalypse Now* as well as *Far Cry 2* is extraordinarily similar. In the novel, the film and the game there is one fixed character who interprets the fragments, the snippets of information, and whose consciousness is charged to process their content. It is through Marlow that we discover Kurtz, it is through Willard that we discover Colonel Kurtz and it is the player that has to discover Jackal.

One of the most important factors in understanding the morality of Kurtz, but also Jackal's, is that they must at least have had the potential for goodness. This becomes most clear when Marlow says: "I tried to break the spell--the heavy, mute spell of the wilderness--that seemed to draw him to the pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions. ... This alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations" (135). Being able to understand a Kurtz-like figure requires the player to see a small hint of humanity somewhere in the monster: "Better his cry -- much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory!" (141). The cry Marlow alludes to is Kurtz's "The Horror The Horror!" (139). Marlow realising that he has the potential to be Kurtz is critical in understanding Kurtz's effect on Marlow and the reader. Thale concludes: "Kurtz's triumph is ontological. He existed as a human being capable of good and evil. His tragedy is moral, for he existed subject to no law or standard" (356). What can be concluded then is that the identification of Jackal and Kurtz's good nature is necessary for them to symbolise something much

greater. Only sympathy would not have been enough to recognise the darkness as a symbol for the darkness within Western culture. The realisation that anything pure has the potential to be corrupted empowers the symbol.

A similar relation is established between Jackal and the player in *Far Cry 2*, but the effect is inverted. Jackal is a character that seems the embodiment of pure evil, but through the tapes the player discovers that he is not just a murderer. In Tape #4, Jackal explains his view on morality:

Why arms, why not car parts? Radios?" "What's the difference? Same job really. You get up, you meet your clients and discuss a fair price. You make a delivery, receive payment. Sounds boring, but it's not. It's just simple. I've been doing what man has been doing for thousands of years, trading one thing for another. If it's you who wants to attach morality to it, make it evil, insane. (Jackal Tape 4. see YouTube 2:08 - 2:30)

Ultimately, through the tapes, players discover Jackal's goal. He wants to rid the country of violence, by fuelling that very violence with the guns he provides, ultimately hoping that both sides destroy each other. He also wants to save tens of thousands of civilians who are caught between the crossfire of the two factions that are currently fighting the civil war. This heroic notion would have been acceptable if Jackal was not the provider of the guns they use, potentially a cold-blooded murderer, directly and indirectly responsible for thousands of deaths. In tape #17, Jackal ponders on the morality of killing: "If you have to kill someone, if you have to, is it somehow better to do it clean, with a bullet through the head? Is it somehow worse to chop them up with an axe? And what if you have to kill ten or a hundred or a thousand? And what if in doing so you save a thousand? What is the measure of a man,

and his murder?” (Tape 17, see YouTube 9:24-9:41) Players realize that Jackal has the potential to be good, he aims to save innocent people after all, but because of all the violence, his sense of morality has been corrupted and he can no longer see the evil in his own actions. What becomes clear is that Jackal views morality as subjective, but more importantly he places himself above all of the natives, corrupts them by setting them up against each other and fuels their fights with the guns he provides. The arrogance of his decision to decide the fate of the country is very similar to the arrogance of colonialism to decide the fate of Africa. In this way, Jackal clearly resembles Kurtz: “Kurtz’s avarice and lust for power, whose seeds precede his life in Africa, and of which the human skulls around his dwelling are a symbol, are unrestrained. He betrays the native people, corrupting and ruthlessly exploiting them. He employs African villagers to fight their fellow men exclusively for his benefit, so that he can amass the maximum quantity of ivory” (Goonetilleke 33). One of the most striking similarities is how both men inspire Africans to fight each other, for nothing but profit. Although profit is different for both Kurtz and Jackal, it is not so hard to see money as Jackal’s ivory.

A final notion that must be addressed is the symbolism of the underworld and the descent into darkness. In her article, “Marlow's Descent into Hell,” Lillian Feder compares Marlow’s journey to the visit of Hades, God of the underworld, in the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. “Implicit in Marlow's remarks is the theme of the *Aeneid*, for Vergil is concerned with this ‘idea,’ the heroic goal as justification for Rome's plunder and cruelty; moreover, Conrad, like Vergil, sees the tragic limitations of those dedicated to the heroic ideal. Thus, at the very beginning of *Heart of Darkness*, the Roman legend, prophesied and justified in

Hades, provides an archetypal background for Kurtz's deeds and for Marlow's discovery of himself in a hell perhaps more terrible than Vergil's, but no less enlightening" (282). The heroic goal that Feder mentions is the belief that other countries would benefit from, or even require, being civilized by the Romans, thus legitimizing their conquest. What is interesting about this is the name of the antagonist in *Far Cry 2*, namely, Jackal. Jackal is a figure in Egyptian mythology, mostly pertaining to the god Anubis, often seen as the Egyptian equivalent of the Greek god Hades. Vergil also placed the ideal of the Roman conquest above the suffering that it caused, similar to way that the heroic ideal always takes precedent in the decision making of Kurtz and Jackal. Some other small details allude to the fact that both the game and the novel contain elements of self-discovery and resemble the descent into hell. Feder continues to explain the some of the imagery: "The ambiguous sign "Approach cautiously," which, Marlow explains, has little practical use since it could only be found after one had reached the place where it is inscribed, is reminiscent of Sibyl's warning. Similarly, in *Far Cry 2*, just before reaching the location named "heart of darkness" in the game, the player is presented with the warning: "There will be no way back" even though going back is not really an option any more. What can be concluded is that all three works clearly work with the idea of a descent into a place of darkness and the way that it symbolises a journey into and the discovery of the darker possibilities of the mind.

The Path to Darkness: Setting and Atmosphere in *Heart of Darkness* and *Far Cry 2*

The environment plays a crucial part in understanding Kurtz's transformation as well as Jackal's. It is not just the horrible soul of imperialism or the lost faith in Western ideals or the greed for money and power that explain the corruption of their minds; the oppressive atmosphere and environment also contribute to the context enabling the reader or player to understand the protagonist's corruption. In Ubisoft's *Far Cry 2*, the setting and atmosphere are what make the game unique. Many open-world shooter-games, like the *Grand Theft Auto 5* or *Just Cause*, equal the potential for violence that is featured in *Far Cry 2*, but what sets *Far Cry 2* apart is the environment and the accompanying psychological strain that affects the player's choice of action.

The African environment is the first element of this oppressive setting. Instead of just being a scenic battleground, the environment in *Far Cry 2* is dynamic and an ever-changing factor. The landscapes vary from open to impassable and the weather constantly changes. Any action in this harsh environment can set off a chain of events of massive proportions. Starting a fire in an open field can be a bad idea, as the fire may grow dynamically based on wind speed, vegetation and weather conditions (*See figure 4*). The game world also features day and night. Players can choose when to do certain missions. Waiting until night can increase their chances to approach unseen, but also increases the difficulty to spot enemies. The world challenges players in a dynamic way. Though they are free to choose to approach whatever way players imagine, each way comes with its own dangers and opportunities that challenge the player in unique ways.

A second element that induces strain on the player's psyche is the scarcity of resources. In *Far Cry 2* weapons and ammunition are scarce. Guns can fail to shoot or break at any moment. L.B. Jeffries identifies the most important function of this design: "It is very easy to find yourself in the middle of the desert low on health, using a broken gun, low on ammo, and not being anywhere near a save-point. Coupled with the hostile landscape, *Far Cry 2* steadily coerces the player into changing their behaviour because of the constant stress it creates."

A similar yet distinct aspect of the setting in *Far Cry 2* is illness. During the entirety of the game, the player suffers from malaria. It is of critical importance to ensure a steady supply of medication to survive and complete the game. Medicine for this plaguing illness is very scarce and mostly supplied by shady groups who players would rather not be dealing with. The need for a constant supply of medicine is the first aspect of the game that creates an unending flow of pressure on the player. Players can never focus on exploring or fighting for an extended period of time without thinking about ways to acquire more medicine. Besides the perpetual psychological strain, the constant need for medicine also forces players into uneasy decisions. One of the choices that the game gives players is whether to save missionaries or friendly mercenaries. In some situations, players simply cannot save both. Choosing the former will supply players with the medicine they need, but in the process they will have to sacrifice a friendly character, whose death will be permanent. Sacrificing allies is no easy decision, but sometimes when the need for medicine becomes too big, the game leaves the player with no other option but to make a dark decision and act selfishly.

The combination of these first three elements can be related to the tension that the environment in *Heart of Darkness* generates. While almost any story uses obstacles as a way to generate tension, the tension and psychological strain that the environment produces is vital in understanding Kurtz's corruption: "In Marlow's account of his journey up-river there can be observed an obscure vacillation between the horror as an effect of colonial intervention and the location of the horror's cause as the environment itself" (Brown 17). What Brown means is that the environment is an independent contributor to the horror, even without regarding the evil that imperialism presents. *Far Cry 2* mimics this by never allowing the environment to become anything less than completely oppressive. The challenge that the environment offers is not just a device to make interesting gameplay, but it creates the feeling that a player is in a place that brings out savagery, even in the most civilised. On the tenth tape, Jackal describes how he saw a child, barely seventeen, shooting a soldier and looting his boots. *Far Cry 2* depicts Africa as a place of complete darkness, similar to the way that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* does, but requires certain game mechanics, like the elements exemplified, to transmit that into an experience whilst playing.

Illness in *Far Cry 2* can also be seen as a metaphor for violence and greed. In the player's second meeting with Jackal, he describes violence as a disease: "It's a goddamn disease, is what it is. It's a cancer. - You see it. They can't get enough. They just take and take, until it kills them. And once they're gone, someone else takes their place, and they're diseased too. Every cell is infected" (*See figure 3*). This resembles Kurtz's illness in *Heart of Darkness* and the way in which his illness can be seen as a symbol for the corruption of the mind and his realization of that fact.

With colonialism came an influx of diseases, which caused a raging epidemic across the entire Congo, resulting in the metaphor that colonialism is the bringer of physical diseases (Dempsey 327-331). Colonialism in turn can be seen as a metaphor for the disease of the mind, resulting in both physical effects on the country, as well the psychological symptoms identified in Kurtz, just before his final moment. Through some of Marlow's comments on the imperialistic administration this metaphor becomes more clear: "There wasn't even a shed there, and she was shelling the bush. -- There was a touch of insanity in the proceedings" (74). In a similar, but more direct fashion, Jackal attacks the proceeding of the modern West: "I'll tell you what's sick, people in the UK, US, Sweden, Canada, they pay their taxes and some remote piloted drone fires a missile into a public market to hit some warlord. -- It's not sick to arm people, it's sick to bombard their crooks and dictators in the protection of our interests and then call it international justice. (Jackal Tape 11. YouTube. 5:55-6:18) Jackal points to the fact that taxpayers indirectly fund the military actions of Western governments, making them indirectly responsible for the casualties they inflict, similar to the casualties that he creates. Jackal then turns into an important symbol for the possible evil in political proceedings of the modern West. Kurtz can be seen as the result of the darkness in colonialism and Jackal can be seen as a possible result in the dark proceedings of the modern West. Jackal came as a military man, to maintain the West's justice, but the hostility of the environment and the horrors he encounters have twisted his sense of morality.

At the end of the video game Jackal reveals that both he and the player will have to die. They are part of the problem, contributors to the disease that is violence. Although

Jackal has placed himself above everyone else, he realises there is no way back for him. He knows he is part of the violence that he is trying to destroy: “The only way this is going to work is if we see it the whole way through to the end. Every cell of this cancer has to be destroyed. That includes you and me. If we don’t finish this, then this whole mission has been a waste” (See figures 5 and 6). Jackal believes that there is no cure for violence and he intends to let those infected destroy each other. Although much less dramatic than Kurtz’s final outcry, Jackal’s realisation of his own evil is very similar to that of Kurtz. It can be seen as Jackal’s final moral victory, proving that he identifies his own corruption and realises he does not deserve to survive.

The setting and atmosphere of *Far Cry 2*, as well as the observed corruption in Jackal and the player, are similar to the environment in which Kurtz descended into darkness. The setting and atmosphere in *Far Cry 2* show how a place filled with violence and darkness can facilitate the corruption of the mind. In a way, *Far Cry 2* features a descent into darkness, but also insight into the corruption of a human mind and in this way it has similar potential for self-discovery and reflection as can be identified in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.

Conclusion

Ubisoft's *Far Cry 2* can be seen as an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. *Far Cry 2* is set in the 21st century, more than a hundred years after Conrad's novel. In order to adapt Conrad's novel into a successful game, many elements had to be adjusted to fit the medium and difference in time between the settings. Linear plot elements, such as Marlow's trip upstream, had to be removed to allow for free and interactive gameplay in an open-world environment. By placing the story in the 21st century, traditional imperialist elements, such as slavery are not featured in *Far Cry 2*. The game does feature Western military intervention and criticizes it, and the underlying political structures, for similar reasons. *Far Cry 2* depicts an African country in turmoil and uses the dark and violent setting as a stage to show a man's psychological path into darkness. Similarly to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, *Far Cry 2* features a fragmented discovery of the antagonist. In the novel, the film as well as the game, the snippets of information are interpreted through the perspective of a single character. Jackal is a Kurtz-like character with a similar greed for money and power. The corruption of both characters can only be understood through the savage and violent context in which they develop. Marlow's sympathetic identification with Kurtz inspires reflection on his own capacity for evil and casts a dark shadow over a colonial past. Similarly, *Far Cry 2* inspires players to reflect on the sympathy they might feel for Jackal and on the morality of Jackal, but also on the morality of the West. *Far Cry 2* puts players in an extremely hostile environment. The stress it induces on the player's psyche, combined with the moral nature of the choices within the game,

create a unique pressure on players. That atmosphere helps players to understand and sympathize with Jackal and helps to understand how a man can fall into darkness. Because the present paper has focussed mostly on the relation between Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Ubisoft's *Far Cry 2*, more research is warranted between *Far Cry 2* and other adaptations of Conrad's novel. An official *Apocalypse Now* video game, designed with the help of Coppola, is scheduled to be released in 2020 (Fahey) and it would be very interesting to see more research into the relation between both game adaptations, but also between both the film and game adaptation of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*.

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

- Apocalypse Now*. By Francis Ford Coppola. Perf. Marlon Brando, Robert Duvall, Martin Sheen, Frederic Forrest, Albert Hall, Sam Bottoms, Laurence Fishburne, Dennis Hopper, G.D. Spradlin, Harrison Ford, Scott Glenn, and Glenn Walken. United Artists, 1979.
- Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness*. Ontario: Broadview Press. 1995. Print.
- Far Cry 2*. Ubisoft. 23 Oct. 2008. Video Game.

Secondary Sources:

- Achebe, Chinua. "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness." *The Massachusetts Review* 18.4 (1977): 782-94. JSTOR. Web.
- Bogost, Ian. *Persuasive games: The expressive power of videogames*. Mit Press, 2010. Web.
- Brown, Tony C. "Cultural Psychosis on the Frontier: The Work of the Darkness in Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness.'" *Studies in the Novel* 32.1 (2000): 14-28. JSTOR. Web.
- Calleja, G. "Digital Games as Designed Experience: Reframing the Concept of Immersion." *Victoria University of Wellington*. 2007. Web.
- Dempsey, Martin. "The Symptoms of a Heart of Darkness." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3.7 (2013): 327-331. Web.
- Dubbelman, Teun. "Designing stories: practices of narrative in 3D computer games." *ACM Symposium on Video Games*. 2011. Web.
- Fahey, Mike. "Francis Ford Coppola Announces Apocalypse Now Video Game." *Kotaku*. 25 Jan. 2017. Web.
- "Far Cry 2 Jackal Tapes." Youtube. 4 Feb. 2009. Web.

Feder, Lillian. "Marlow's Descent into Hell." *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 9.4 (1955): 280-292. Web.

Goonetilleke D.C.R.A. "Kurtz, Conrad and Nietzsche" *Heart of Darkness*. Ed. Goonetilleke D.C.R.A. Ontario: Broadview Press 1995. 32-36. Print.

Grand Theft Auto V. Rockstar Games. 17 Sept 2013. Video Game.

Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print

Jeffries, L B. "Far Cry 2: The Heart of Darkness Game". *Popmatters*, 1 Apr 2009. Web.

Just Cause. Eidos Interactive. 27 September 2006. Video Game.

Juul, Jesper. "What computer games can and can't do" Digital Arts and Culture. 2000. Web.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond good and evil*. London: Penguin Classics, 2003. Web.

Noyes, John Kenneth. *The mastery of submission: Inventions of masochism*. Cornell University Press, 1997. Web.

Raessens, Joost. "Pervasive Gaming in Context: From Theory Based Design to Validation and Back" Utrecht University, TU Delft, Erasmus University Rotterdam. 2014-2017. Web.

Ryan, M. "Beyond Myth and Metaphor: The Case of Narrative In Digital Media." *The International Journal of Computer Games Research*. 1.1 (2001) Web.

Thale, Jerome. "Marlow's Quest." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 24.4 (1955): 351-358. Web.

Reviews and statistics:

"IGN Far Cry 2 Review: Ubisoft Montreal delivers a shooter like no other." IGN: International Games Network. 21. October 2008. Web.

Mcinnis, shaun. "Far Cry 2 Review." Gamespot.com. 21 Oct. 2008. Web.

"VGChartz: Far Cry 2 Global Game Sales." Video Game Chartz. Web.

Appendix



Fig. 1 - Jackal



Fig. 2 - A Jackal Interview Tape



Fig. 3 - Jackal describing violence



Fig 4. - Spreading fire

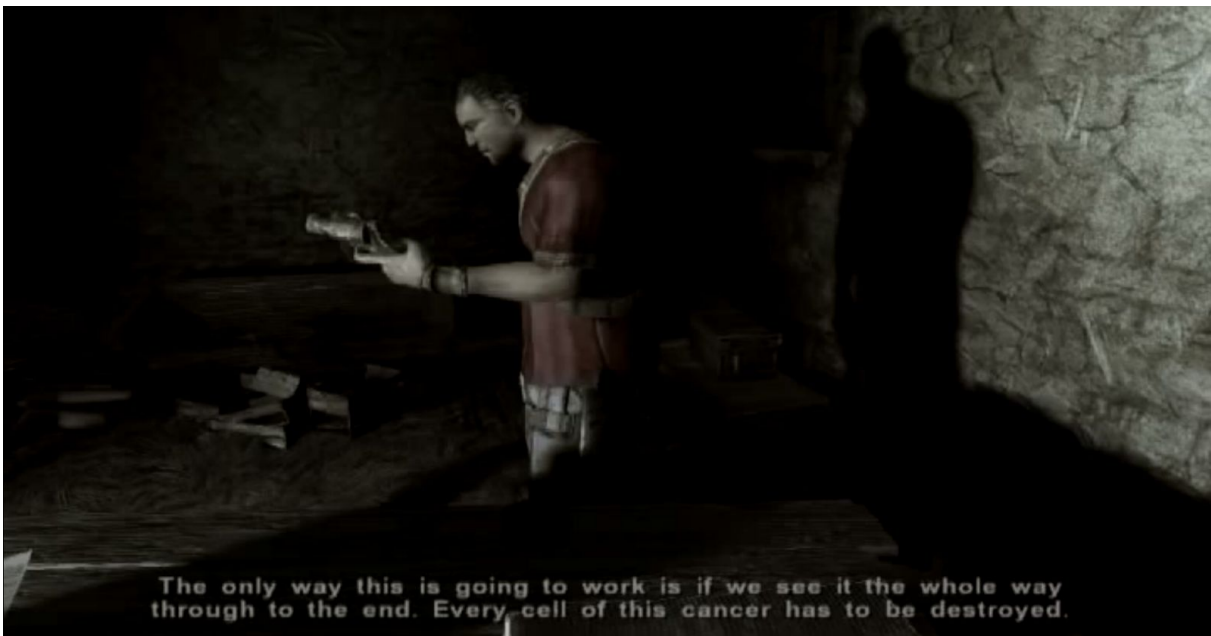


Fig. 5 - Jackal realisation pt.1

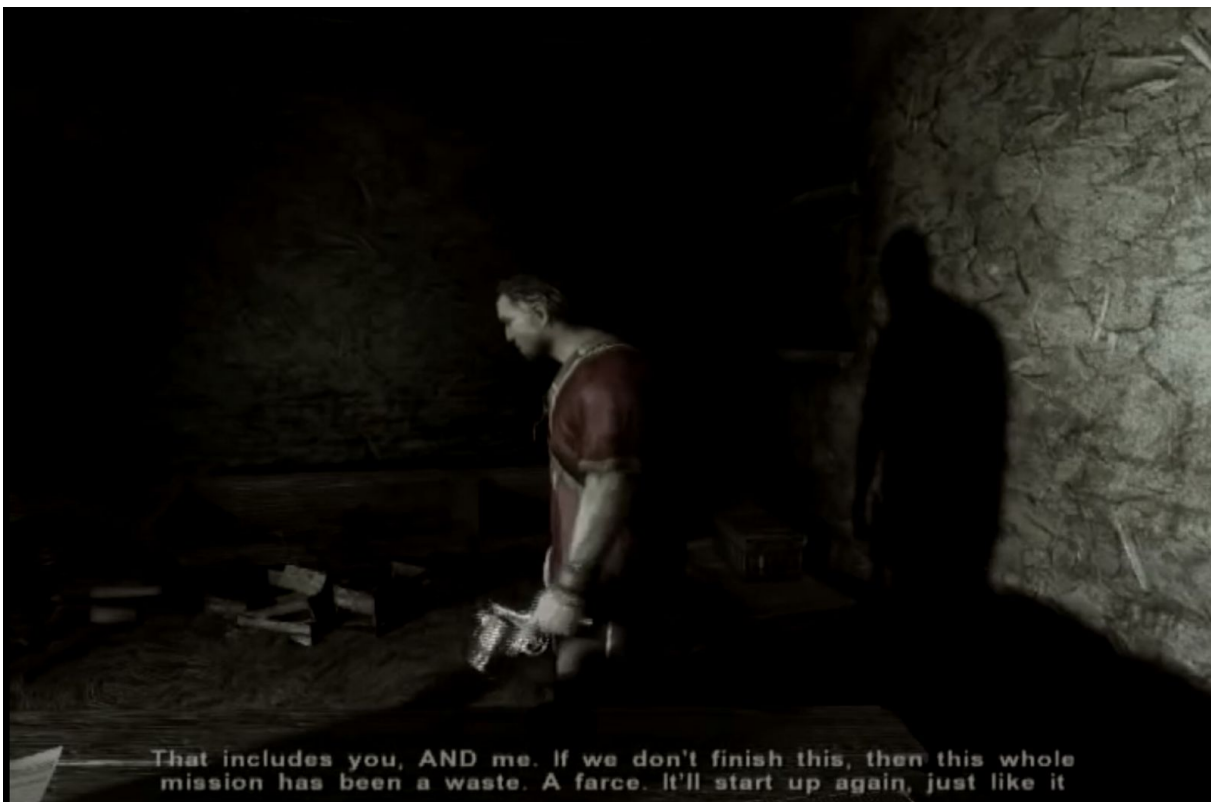


Fig 6. - Jackal's realisation pt.2

