Cameron Irby

Dr. Giles

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<center>Joseph Conrad and the Need for Adaptations</center>

Recently, Conrad has been thrown back into the public eye with the announcement that Francis Ford Coppola and his company American Zoetrope are working on a video game adaptation of the 1979 film *Apocalypse Now,* which is his own rendition of Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness.* Unfortunately, the project has not seen a lot of support as its Kickstarter failed to raise necessary funds, and their personal site has raised only a meager fraction of the production cost. Still, the project has raised over $800,000, so there is a desire by fans of both Conrad and Coppola to bring this legendary film into a new, developing medium (*Apocalypse Now: The Game*). This brings about the eternal question: why? Why are adaptations so frequent when there is widespread access to the original works through libraries, bookstores, films, and the Internet? We've been exposed to many adaptations of classic works that feel soulless, and that is one of the primary reasons the adage "The book is always better" continues to persist in our culture. It should be noted, however, that there have been many great adaptations that have reached a level of respect equal to or greater than the original work. The reason adaptations are so common is precisely because of our constant access to older works. Modern readers are encouraged to examine the original texts through adaptations and are invited to engage in vertical readings of both the ur-text and the adaptation, developing their own interpretations of both in the process.

Before examining how adaptations work, it is important to examine how certain texts stay relevant in our culture while others disappear into obscurity. Let's use Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as our primary example. Why does Conrad's 1899 novel about the Belgian Congo, the ivory trade, and an old sailor's trip down a river continue to resonate with readers in the 118 years since its publication? There are many reasons, some trivial and some worth examining in detail. One of the most well-known reasons for its continued success is that the novel comes from a celebrated author whose work was published in multiple languages and who wrote for both an English and a Polish audience. Because Conrad was popular in his time, subsequent generations have been exposed to his works, and they have also found his tales worth their time. This echo continued to ripple through the 20th century to our present day, as more and more people became exposed to *Heart of Darkness* and to Conrad's other works.

Another theory as to why Conrad needs to be revisited so often comes from Anna Stenport's article "The Eradication of Memory: Film Adaptations and Algorithms of the Digital." Stenport argues that society suffers from "accelerated techno-cultural forgetfulness" as a result of our current media diet (86). She describes the phenomenon as a key reason for Hollywood's fascination with remakes of older works: "[T]he past can be forgotten quickly, but remakes provide a way of reminding us of what was worth remembering and of continuously reintegrating these cultural instantiations into a present" (Stenport 86). Humorously, Stenport also argues that the adaptation does not need to be good; instead, "the practice is culturally and historically significant in itself" (86). It is through repetition that we keep our collective memory in check.

What, then, was so important about *Heart of Darkness* that it needed to be remembered, reprinted, retold, and revisited so often? Some, such as Edward Said, state that "Conrad *dates* imperialism, shows its contingency, records its illusions and tremendous violence and waste… [and]

he permits his later reader to imagine something other than an Africa carved up into dozens of European colonies…" (366, original emphasis). Conrad's critique of the Belgian colonizers' devastating and horrible practices in the pursuit of ivory, often celebrated by many post-colonial theorists, continues to question readers about how they view the world outside the borders of their respective countries. Though the world has largely changed for the better since then, corporations and governments continue to exploit third-world countries for cheap labor and burden innocent people with the refuse they discard. Since imperialism has only shifted hands, *Heart of Darkness*'s tale of unchecked power and inhuman practices remains relevant.

Heart of Darkness also exposes the rampant racism of Western civilization, a topic that is still very much alive in our modern society. Hunt Hawkins describes Conrad's revilement of the institutional racism of his day in his unassumingly-titled article "*Heart of Darkness* and Racism." In it, he discusses the infamous "white man's burden." The burden referenced is, sadly, the entirety of Africa, as European colonizers sought to "modernize" the continent and train the current inhabitants how to be more like them. This is an impossible task, Hawkins writes, as Conrad "points out that Europeans don't live up to their own ideals as civilizers" through *Heart of Darkness* and exposes the "exploitation and violence" that these colonizers hid from their home continent (336). Hawkins does not, however, exempt Conrad of his own racism, something that many critics such as Chinua Achebe have noted repeatedly, but he does defend Conrad for his staunch opposition towards such barbaric behavior towards mankind.

Academic discussions like these are another reason why *Heart of Darkness* and Conrad continue to remain in our thoughts, writings, and syllabi. The structure of academia promotes discussions of older texts that possess a corpus of scholarship, a description that *Heart of Darkness* fits perfectly. In fact, scholarship has been written decrying the fact that *Heart of Darkness* is taught in

lieu of other texts. As mentioned earlier, Achebe was a strong critic of Conrad, but he was equally appalled that educators taught *Heart of Darkness*, which he called "the most commonly prescribed novel in twentieth-century literature courses," as the only text about Africa for decades (316). He was outraged that there were virtually no discussions of African texts, that students who read his own works were completely oblivious to the idea that Africa had evolved like the rest of the world, and that few critics had called Conrad out for his "thoroughgoing racist" portrayals of Africans in *Heart of Darkness* (Achebe 313). Such an emotional response towards an author considered by many to be one of the greatest writers of the past century elicited many responses after the article's publication, and these responses have also been engaged with through other articles. Achebe's piece created such a stir in Conrad studies that his article has been bundled into many critical publications of *Heart of Darkness*, thus perpetuating the discussion of Conrad and his works through controversy and new interpretations.

It is the combination of the pertinent themes of *Heart of Darkness,* the perpetual use of the text in academia, and the constant re-interpretations of Conrad's seminal work that keeps bringing him back into the focus of popular media. This blend of factors is what keeps Conrad "permanent literature," as Achebe described it (308). With the postmodern emphasis on meaning-making flourishing among today's readers, adaptations are becoming an increasingly popular way of dissecting the motifs, techniques, and core messages of literary works.

There are, unfortunately, many who view any adaptation as a blemish upon the original work, regardless of the adaptation's quality or literary value. I continue to use "work" rather than "book" because all media can be adapted into another form. Books can become a film, a film can be transformed into a video game, a game can be adapted as a novel, and so on. The idea that adaptations are inferior to an original work is most likely based on the assumption that one medium

is superior to another. My research is not intended to discount the fact that there are bad adaptations; rather, I seek to defend adaptations from those who would decry their prevalence in our culture.

Conrad, who famously disliked theater, was acutely aware of the medium's significance and of the importance of adapting his literature for the stage as he was adapting *The Secret Agent*. On his play's debut, he writes, "I found the writing of *The Secret Agent* very tiring; it meant cutting all the flesh off the book. And I realized then, as I never had done, what a gruesome story I had written… I had to get to the bare bones of the story in making my play" (qtd. in Hand 57). Note the phrasing here, as Conrad must deconstruct the plot, characters, themes, and scenery of *The Secret Agent* to *re-*construct it for his stage adaptation. It is, as Richard Hand describes it, "not far short of a Kurtzian epiphany at a creative heart of darkness" (57). Through his adaptation, Conrad could rediscover the core of his work, even if he had to take liberties with the original plot and characters to fit the whole of London onto a smaller stage.

Now that we have established an adequate background for the lasting qualities of Conrad and his work, a discussion on adaptations can truly begin. What makes an adaptation "good," or to put it another way, why are some adaptations praised where others are reviled or forgotten? There have been many adaptations of *Heart of Darkness* over the years, but only a handful of them have received a notable amount of scholarship. I found two radio dramas by the late Orson Welles, a 1994 made-for-TV film starring Tim Roth, and a small batch of novels that have attempted to adapt *Heart of Darkness* through other means. These adaptations have largely been overlooked, save for some discussion of their initial release. One explanation for this could be that *Apocalypse Now* exists. Coppola's film relocated Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* into the center of the Vietnam War, questioning the motives of the military officials who commanded the US soldiers and the brutality of the war

itself. Another could argue that the difficulty of the original text prevents it from being adapted as easily as others. Since one cannot "get" Conrad as easily as, say, Jane Austen, writers and creators often choose more accessible works to adapt.

Then again, there is a valid argument that states that Conrad's work is adapted into other media through the characters and means of popular culture. Linda J. Dryden writes in her article, "'To Boldly Go: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Popular Culture,'" "In the popular consciousness at least, Conrad's story has moved beyond its nineteenth-century context: the producers of popular culture have found new locations of meaning and new applications for its message in the wider post-imperial world… [W]e find that the literature is evaluated in terms of its 'relevance' to contemporary life" (152). The popularity of Conrad in pop culture can be seen in many episodes of *Star Trek* and the "Bart of Darkness" episode of *The Simpsons*, although Tom Henthorne describes the latter as "a reworking of Hitchcock's *Rear Window*" over a full adaptation of Conrad's story (129). While a proponent of "high" culture may decry or dismiss something as frivolous as a television episode of a long-running comedy series, Dryden and Henthorne both suggest that the digital age we reside in has helped to transform so-called "high" culture into popular culture. Dryden relates:

> [P]opular culture often subsumes, manipulates, and even subverts the established forms of 'high' culture… [it] may often be acutely aware of the presence of those conservatively validated forms of culture, like literature, and rarely sets out to contest their received value. Rather, by frequently referencing works of 'high' culture, it may be that the popular forms are celebrating that culture while at the same time creating new cultural products for mass consumption. (154-55)

Dryden continues to discuss how the line between "high" and "low" culture has begun to blur as the technologies that were once looked down upon by the cultural elite are now being adopted by them.

Nevertheless, James Decker points out in his article "Literary Text, Cinematic 'Edition'" that battle lines are being drawn without the proponents of either side recognizing the merits of the other: "While some critics heavily privilege the source novel and others treat the film as a distinct entity, neither group satisfactorily acknowledges both the social expectations about adaptations and the differences in media convention" (154). To give an adaptation a just critique, one must accept that both the original and the adaptation have equal value.

If we consider all forms of adaptations fair game, how then does one adapt a text such as *Heart of Darkness* successfully? Crucially, it must be noted that the adaptation, regardless of its form, is obligated to embody a core element of the original text. After all, it is an *adaptation* of a work, not a replacement. Take, for example, Yedda Morrison's *Darkness*, which takes pages from *Heart of Darkness* and whites out large parts of the text, leaving its references to nature untouched. She explains that she had hoped "to activate the backdrop or scenery upon which this story of colonial horror unfolds, and in so doing to attend to the latent narratives of any organic, non-human remains" (Morrison). Here, Morrison is not replacing Conrad's words with her own but is instead transforming it by removing the human elements. This allows a portion of *Heart of Darkness* that was previously overlooked to be brought to light.

Most adaptations akin to Morrison's choose less radical means, choosing to either omit sections of the original work or include additional information gathered from other sources. Anyago and Mairowitz performed a combination of both in their graphic novel adaptation of *Heart of Darkness*, which included many details from Conrad's *Congo Diary*. The comic blends fact and fiction, sketching Marlow with Conrad's features, including reproductions of "the rough map of the route Conrad followed in 1890," and other personal details (Bragard 51). By combining *Heart of Darkness* with Conrad's personal experience, Anyago and Mairowitz "[reaffirm] that the author is not dead,

that his/her work is marked by his/her life" (Bragard 54). Once again, the act of adaptation is to reignite society's passion for a text while simultaneously providing fodder for new conversations and interpretations of that ur-text.

While some critics would argue that the graphic novel is not a faithful adaptation of *Heart of Darkness*, I must again reiterate that the purpose of these adaptations are not to *replace* Conrad or his original text; works such as Anyago and Mairowitz's comic or Morrison's whited-out pages are to be read in tandem with *Heart of Darkness*. These transformations of Conrad's text serve two core purposes, per Roumiana Deltcheva and her article "Destination Classified: On the Transformation of Spatial Forms in Applying the Narrative Text to Film." Deltcheva writes that "…it brings the world of the audience and the world of the narrative in greater proximity, and it implies a certain universality of the problematics, motives, and situations of the narrative" (753). Morrison's adaptation highlights the importance of the natural world both in *Heart of Darkness* and in the English language. Anyago and Mairowitz's disturbing and muddied visuals likewise emphasize the disturbing horrors of Kurtz and the Belgian Congo. Both adaptations derive new meanings from Conrad's original novel, a practice that many English departments continue to foster.

Since adaptations can take many forms and translate the ur-text in varied ways, how can one definitively label an adaptation as "bad?" To put it simply, an adaptation must succeed as a singular, independent work without the assistance of the original text. Helmand and Osadnik explain in their article "Film and Literature: Historical Models of Film Adaptation and a Proposal for a (Poly)System Approach" that, specifically in the case of adapting to film but also into other audiovisual media, creators "do not adapt literature but make use of its elements" (646). When attempting to change from the written word to an audiovisual format, there will be certain segments that cannot be accurately translated, be it through specific historical or geographic details or because we are limited

by the laws of reality. This will lead creators to use the core elements of a work as inspiration for an adaptation instead merely following the text like a script. Unfortunately, as Helmand and Osadnik note, "quite frequently, the aim of a film adaptation is nothing more to find *some* plot, *some* idea, *some* source of inspiration which may become a point of departure for an exclusively cinematic conception" (649, original emphasis). It is not hard to see this put into action, as so many film adaptations of literary classics are only shells to house the ghost of a script that has been passed from desk to desk in Hollywood.

Curiously, the most successful adaptations of literature into audiovisuals are some of the least faithful to the original text. Before dismissing this paradoxical statement, consider *Apocalypse Now*. Coppola's reinterpretation of *Heart of Darkness* contains a jungle, a warrior-poet named Kurtz, and a trip down a river, but there are few other connections to Conrad's story beyond those. Despite this, the Vietnam-era war film is regarded as one of the most powerful adaptations of *Heart of Darkness*, and it has been irrevocably linked to Conrad's original text because of its unique interpretation of Kurtz and the "horror" he whispers. To further illustrate my point, I will discuss *Apocalypse Now*, its rerelease *Apocalypse Now: Redux*, and another audiovisual adaptation that combines elements of both *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*: the 2012 video game *Spec Ops: The Line*.

Apocalypse Now needs little explanation as to why it is connected to Conrad and *Heart of Darkness*. The final third of the film's events correlate well with the plot of *Heart of Darkness*, but there are enough differences between the two that keep it from being a direct translation of the ur-text. Captain Willard is a much more melancholic interpretation of Marlow while still taking the role of storyteller, and his hunt for the simultaneously frightening and curious Colonel Kurtz descends into a shadowy murder cloaked in smoke and blood.

Unfortunately for Conrad scholars, *Apocalypse Now* fails to express Conrad's story well to the audience. Where Marlow describes his experience with the enigmatic Kurtz and what happened after it, we are only given "the horror" that Colonel Kurtz whispers and the undirected impact of those words. One of the biggest reasons for this is the film's experimental format and pacing. Frank Magill's *Cinema: The Novel into Film* describes the film as "technically dazzling," but proclaims that it "has a tendency to pound in its messages too obviously" (236). Likewise, Marsha Kinder states in her article "The Power of Adaptation in *Apocalypse Now*" that "although Coppola succeeds in creating an overpowering sensuous experience of the war's madness… he confuses the moral issues, perhaps because of his drive to personalize the material. In identifying so strongly with Kurtz, he distortes the issue of power and upsests the delicate balance between the Conrad story and the subject of Vietnam" (13). The biggest problem, for both Magill and Kinder, is that the focus of *Apocalypse Now* is all over the place and that it strived to reach for more than it could handle.

Nevertheless, the film *does* provide a wonderful and scathing adaptation of another work, Michael Herr's *Dispatches*. This book chronicles Herr's coverage of the Vietnam War during his stay as a journalist. Tellingly, the script for *Apocalypse Now* was also co-crafted by Herr. In his article "Narrative Mode, Mixed Images, and Adaptation in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*," German Vargas draws parallels between Herr's script for the film, *Heart of Darkness*, and *Dispatches*, using this quote from the latter to illustrate how Vietnam had become another Africa: "It was spookwar then, adventure; not exactly soldiers, not even advisors yet but Irregulars, working in remote places under little direct authority, acting out their fantasies with more freedom than most men ever know" (qt. in Vargas 94). This scene alone portrays a Kurtzian vision of war and terror while also calling to mind Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore's machismo and warzone beach parties. Through Herr's writing, we can see that though Conrad's story is not portrayed through its plot, the

"heart of darkness" and the madness of Kurtz were brought to the jungles of Vietnam by American soldiers.

It may be true that the story of *Heart of Darkness* is not adapted as well as *Dispatches* was through *Apocalypse Now*, but that does not mean that Conrad's handiwork is absent. There is one notable example that I would like to show, a connection between Willard and Conrad himself. Throughout the film, Willard is the passive participant. He observes the chaos around him with an impassive eye while criticizing the complacency and folly of the American soldiers who fight a war because they were told to. Conrad writes in his preface to "*Narcissus*," "My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you *see*" (261, original emphasis). While there is a significant difference between the seeing one does at a theater and what the mind's eye sees in the imagination, something that George Bluestone points out in his text *Novels into Film*, Conrad's written words and Coppola's vibrant visions both want the recipients of their stories to see, to experience an organic truth of life (Bluestone 1-2). This connection between Willard and Conrad is quite fascinating, as there are many scenes where the viewer follows his gaze and watches the events unfold before him. By making us see what they see, we are confronted with the horrors of the Vietnam War and of the Belgian Congo.

One of the things that Coppola wanted the audience to see was the full version of *Apocalypse Now*, but this would not be done until the 2001 release of *Apocalypse Now: Redux*. Many would find the concept of a "director's cut" like this to be like publishing a new edition of a popular novel while adding extra chapters, and this would not be an unfair comparison. *Redux*, however, has the distinction of being closer to the original film Coppola desired before it was cut down to a more feasible running time. To be frank, the process of creating *Redux* and restoring older footage is quite similar to Conrad adapting *The Secret Agent* for the stage but in reverse. Instead of having to omit

scenes and characters, there are now added sections of dialogue and reworked scenes that show more of the characters. The major inclusion is a pair of scenes that add over 45 minutes to the film, making *Redux* nearly three and a half hours long. The first scene brings the Playboy girls back as Willard trades some of the boat's resources to give the rest of the crew access to the women. The second finds Willard and the other soldiers stumbling onto a French plantation, halting their journey down the river altogether for a conversation with the mysterious inhabitants there.

The return of the Playboy models is random and absurd in the context of the film, just as their arrival was in the 1979 cut. Both cases highlight the objectification of women and their relative absence from the "man's world" of warmongering, but *Redux*'s new scene magnifies the disparity. Here, the women act as if they are under hypnosis, reciting their stories to half-listening men as they are undressed. They are traded like property, colonized by a masculine power and given nothing in return. Jacqui Sadashige, writing for the University of Pennsylvania, also notes that this scene also deals with the topic of who profits from the war and the colonization. Chef and Lance are both allowed to sleep with the Playmates, but Clean, a young African American soldier, is denied access. The other African American soldier, Chief Phillips, does not even attempt to try, refusing to leave the offer entirely. Here, Sadashige writes, "the film's callous treatment of African Americans—the refusal of miscegenation, its rendering of that refusal as a source of comic relief, and the representation of black Americans as expendable in narrative and other terms—is profoundly and disturbingly underscored in this new version" (1920). The treatment of these black characters correlates to the overarching narrative of America's new imperialist attitudes toward others that are hidden under a veneer of patriotism and chants of democracy-in-action.

Where the brief Playboy scene acts as a brief reprieve from the overall plot, the visit to the French plantation stops it entirely, spending over twenty minutes on this dreamlike venture.

Conversations erupt between Willard and the French residents, there is a brief tryst between Willard and a woman named Roxanne, and dinner is had. Not much else happens, and the scene contains nothing of narrative importance. While many moviegoers would become bored with such a scene, I would like to draw attention back to Conrad and *Heart of Darkness.* There are multiple instances where Marlow halts his narration, either from his audience piping up or due to going on a tangent. In one notable example, Marlow has just finished describing the death of his helmsman when he starts to drift into a reverie about a girl:

> He was silent for a long time.
>
> > "I laid the ghost of his gifts at last with a lie," he began suddenly. "Girl! What? Did I mention a girl?" (Conrad 48)

He then proceeds to discuss Kurtz and women at great length before returning to his tale. In a strange way, the plantation scene works in the same way. Both moments break the forward motion of their narratives to discuss something else entirely. Marlow brings up the role of women in the colonies, saying that they should be "out of it—completely" (Conrad 48). Meanwhile, Marais, the owner of the plantation, expresses that America should not be so restrained in their little war: "Why don't you Americans learn from us? From our mistakes? *Mon Dieu*, with your army, your strength, your power, you could win if you want to… You could win!" (*Redux*). The irony of this scene years after America's defeat at Vietnam is deliciously Conradian, something that Pamela Demory points out in her essay on *Redux*. She continues, stating that "while *Redux* is more 'dated'… it also adds another layer of repetition, suggesting—in some ways—even more strongly that imperialism is a never-ending cycle" (Demory 348). The French were driven out of Vietnam, but now America has taken its place.

The motif of repetition is something that *Redux* and *Heart of Darkness* share. With Marlow, the repetitions of "the horror," the last words of Kurtz, resound in his mind, but their meaning is lost on him. In *Redux*, the cycle of imperialism is about to repeat itself as America, choosing not to learn from France's "mistake" yet also refusing to exterminate an entire country like Colonel Kurtz, will lose the Vietnam War. Coppola, too, repeats the entirety of *Apocalypse Now*, dredging up old footage and stitching it back together in order to bring the work back into the cultural consciousness. To keep us from forgetting, Demory writes, Coppola purposefully "opens up wounds, errors, flaws—lies—that do not get resolved" with *Apocalypse Now* or *Redux* (348). Now with his desire to establish a video game adaptation of *Apocalypse Now*, Coppola can provide another telling of the story, akin to how *Redux*, as Demory explains, "attempts to explain, clarify, reveal, the truth, but also re-enacts the lies, the errors, which then must be narrated again" (348). The time may come when we do not need *Apocalypse Now* to be retold, but that has not happened just yet.

Thankfully, others are taking Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* into new territory through adaptation, such as in Yager Development's *Spec Ops: The Line*. On its surface, *Spec Ops* is one of many "militainment" shooters, a competitor among industry juggernauts like *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield*. The latter pair of games have generated millions of dollars of revenue, and they have only recently been faced with market competition from other games. Despite this, *Spec Ops* did something that few militainment shooter games were willing to do: question the status quo.

Spec Ops begins with a flash-forward, as the player becomes engaged in one of many glorifying set-pieces as they control Captain Walker of Delta Squad to gun down enemy helicopters amongst a desolated Dubai skyline. The game then cuts to an opening credits sequence, starring the player's username as a "special guest." Through a cinematic and voice-over from Walker, we learn that Dubai was hit by frequent sandstorms that decimated the city. Colonel Konrad (an obvious nod

to Conrad himself) was sent with the 33rd Regiment to evacuate the city, but as the storms grew worse, he was commanded to retreat. Konrad deserts along with the "Damned 33rd" as they attempt to help the people of Dubai. Captain Walker's role mirrors that of Willard from *Apocalypse Now*, as Walker must embark on a recon mission to find Konrad and discover what happened to Dubai. As Delta Squad progresses, Walker continues to shift objectives. The mission to find Konrad is quickly abandoned once a US soldier is discovered dead at the hands of local rebels, but the hunt soon becomes self-defense as the 33rd begins to assail them. Soon, Konrad becomes a target for execution instead of extraction as Walker seeks to stop his tyranny.

One who has encountered *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now* will instantly recognize these plot points, but the beauty of an adaptation is in adapting the core of the text, not in making the same story again and again. The theme that *Spec Ops* carries from both Conrad and Coppola is the power of the individual to overwhelm others when given absolute power and control. Marlow unmasked the brutality of the Belgian Congo and the ivory trade, Willard related the terrifying atrocities of the Americans in Vietnam, and Walker showcases how quickly the player can disconnect themselves from violence and death.

As stated earlier, *Spec Ops* takes the common elements of militainment shooters to blend in among them, but where games like *Call of Duty* glorify the player and the military might of America, *Spec Ops* parodies the genre, deconstructing the "fun" of the game to expose the horrors hidden underneath. The most infamous segment of the game comes in Chapter Eight: "The Gate." The game first shows how the 33rd is using white phosphorus on the natives and its effects. Brendan Keogh explains its effects in his article: "[W]hite phosphorous unleashes thick smog of incandescent particles that stick to and burn through flesh. Used extensively throughout the Korean and Vietnam campaigns by the US Army, it has often been deployed on civilian areas to terrible effect, and is still

used in various conflicts today" (9). Soon, Walker and Delta Squad encounter the bulk of Konrad's regiment encamped in front of a massive building colloquially called "The Gate." To reach Konrad's headquarters, Delta must break through, and there just happens to be a nearly infinite supply of white phosphorus sitting right next to them. While players are free to take on the 33rd without using the substance, the 33rd is impossible to overcome. Now the choice becomes clear: do you, the player, bombard an entire army with white phosphorous, or do you quit the game?

Choosing to use the chemical weapon will trigger a scene where Walker stares into a laptop, targeting humanoid shapes on a green and white screen. As the smoke begins to brighten the screen, we see the grim face of Walker reflected towards us. Once the deed is done, the player must guide Walker through the hellish wasteland they have created. Soldiers gasp for air, beg for death, and scream in agony as their flesh is burned from their bones, but pain does not hit Walker himself until he discovers that one of the "targets" he hit was a refugee camp set up to protect unarmed citizens from Delta Squad's rampage. This all could have been avoided, states Johannes Fehrle, if players had simply turned the game off: "The key to the moral dilemma the game raises is interactivity, but it is not interactivity in the sense of the player making or even having real *narrative* choices, but rather interactivity in the sense of the player advancing the game through her actions… The only action the player could take… is to stop playing the game" (240). By becoming complicit in Walker's descent into madness and chaos, the player enters the mind of the Kurtzian protagonist, where the ends justify the means of obtaining wealth and power.

One does not need to have read *Heart of Darkness* or seen *Apocalypse Now* to get the anti-war and anti-imperialist themes, and that is the reason adaptations are so important. *Spec Ops: The Line* takes what Conrad and Coppola expressed in their respective works and re-tells it in a new light for a new audience. Those that have heard the story before may find that they had forgotten about it

and may be perplexed as to why it had slipped past their memory in the first place. Others may find the former works because they learned so much from the adaptations. No adaptation can truly replace a work of literature. They can only bring to one's mind the reasons why it was called "literature" in the first place.

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