# POSUDEK BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE
## KATEDRA ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA A LITERATURY PedF UK

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| **Autor práce:** | Šimon Klár |
| **Název práce:** | A comparison of Joseph Conrad's novel Heart of Darkness with the videogame Victoria II: Heart of Darkness |
| **Vedoucí práce:** | Bernadette Higgins, M.A. |
| **Rok odevzdání:** | 2024 |
| **Rozsah práce:** | 55 stran |
| **Posudek:** | Vedoucí práce |
| **Autor posudku:** | Bernadette Higgins, M.A. |

| | **Posuzovaná oblast** | **Zvažovaná kritéria** | **Body (0-5)[1]** |
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| **1.** | **Celková charakteristika** | Splnění zásad zpracování práce, adekvátnost titulu práce, naplnění stanoveného cíle, logická struktura práce, vyváženost a propojenost teoretické a praktické části | 3 |
| **2.** | **Teoretická část** | Stanovení a splnění cílů, prezentace různých teoretických přístupů k řešení problému, jejich kritické posouzení a zvolení relevantní teoretické základny pro realizaci praktické části | 3 |
| **3.** | **Praktická část** | Vhodnost a aplikace zvolené metodologie, jasnost formulace hypotéz, relevantní a srozumitelná argumentace a interpretace získaných výsledků, jasnost formulace závěrů práce | 3 |
| **4.** | **Jazyková úroveň** | Gramatická správnost a komplexnost, slovní zásoba, koheze a koherence textu, interpunkce a stylistické aspekty, celková úroveň jazykového projevu | 4 |
| **5.** | **Struktura a forma** | Přehlednost struktury, členění, řazení a proporčnost kapitol a oddílů, konzistentnost úpravy práce, odpovídající rozsah práce, adekvátnost a provedení příloh | 3 |
| **6.** | **Práce s odbornou literaturou** | Kvalita, množství a relevance odborných zdrojů, kritický přístup ke zdrojům, odpovídající úroveň citační praxe | 3 |

**Celkové zhodnocení práce (včetně kritických výhrad):**

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[1] Bodové hodnocení na škále 1-5 (5 bodů maximum), 0 bodů z jedné či více posuzovaných oblastí automaticky znamená, že práce není doporučena k obhajobě.

This thesis explores one of a popular range of grand strategy video games, namely the second expansion of Paradox Interactive's *Victoria II,* 'Heart of Darkness', to consider the extent to which its reference to Conrad's novel is significant and to identify any clear inspiration of the game by the book. In the theoretical part, the author touches on a number of key issues – the history of the Belgian Congo, Victorian racism and imperialism, the Scramble for Africa (the manufacturer's stated focus of the expansion), and the technology that enabled conquest and colonisation during Victoria's reign. At the close of this part, the author says something about the book and its reception and the game and discussions related to its development. One thing that is missing in this part is a brief and clear description of the aims of the game *Victoria II* in general and how it is played (the author offers the rather vague "Victoria II, a game of controlling a nation as an unspecified, never mentioned entity, in a world at the dawn of Queen Victoria's reign" p. 7) and specifically, what is added in the 'Heart of Darkness' expansion. At times, for example in the section on slavery in *Victoria 2* (3.1.2.) the focus turns to the first expansion, 'House Divided CLC' which relates to US history and the connection with the novel is lost.

The author is mainly able to use his theoretical sources well, though tends to rely too much on one source for each topic, e.g. Boesten for history of the Kingdom of Kongo, Hochschild for Belgium and Leopold II, Hourly History for Queen Victoria and Beasley for imperialism and racism (the most interesting of the sections), and on describing and summarising rather than analysing. Perhaps the lack of analysis is due to a disappointing reticence about expressing and exploring his own 'notions' on the part of the author, e.g. he says on p. 18 when talking about the impact of technological developments on colonialism, "Whatever happens, we have got/The Maxim gun, and they have not." (Wills 203) and while I would like to pointlessly comment about and add my own notions, I believe this bit from Wills embodies the Maxim gun perfectly and in all the ways necessary *"*.

The practical part chooses to focus on certain key topics, e.g. racism, slavery, Africans, Europeans, looking first at the novel and then at the video game before offering a synthesis. The topics are well chosen, but the commentary often feels perfunctory and the final conclusion even more so. There is not enough connection between the two parts of the work, theoretical and practical. For example, in the theoretical part, he refers to Chinua Achebe's famous criticism of Conrad's novel and in particular mentions Achebe's criticism of the description of the African woman, presumably the mistress of Kurz, as a 'savage counterpart' to Kurz's refined, European 'Intended'. In the practical part, he refers to Conrad's description in a wholly positive way, without reference to any problematic aspect, though his words of praise in fact echo the dehumanising aspect that Achebe found so repellent, "The book…. does beautiful justice to one African woman, displaying her as a beautiful creature of the jungle", p. 41. The problematic aspects of the video game are also underexamined (e.g. nations classified as 'civilised' and 'uncivilised', its unashamed Eurocentrism etc.). But overall, it is the lack of cohesion that makes this work disappointing, despite its many revealing moments and the author's skilful summary of the novel's historical context.

The author's language is sophisticated and there are frequent felicitous turns of phrase, though there is also evidence of haste at times and a number of avoidable, simple mistakes (e.g. p. 19, "It would be a curious read in the original, and knowing all the philosophical terms beforehand would be of help either, to truly appreciate Labarthe's coming words. However, it is still clear to any reader that Labarther intends to sing praise to both the work and the author").

**Témata a náměty k diskusi při obhajobě**

1) In the theoretical part, the author refers to the philosopher and critic, Lacoue-Labarthe (incidentally, incorrectly shortening his name to Labarthe) but does not really make clear the aspects of his work that are pertinent to his thesis – can the author say more about why he chose to include Lacoue-Labarthe in his theoretical overview?
2) On p. 53 the author writes " Heart of Darkness is a very grim story, in which, perhaps, **European things offer some sort of respite**. But it does not celebrate much". What exactly does he mean by 'some sort of respite' given the criticism of European values he identifies in Conrad's work and the connection of Kurz with European modes of perception and thought?
3) In the conclusion, the author writes that (p. 53) the game's "goal is to entertain. To provide the player with a pleasant experience which is disconnected from the pain of everyday life". Does he feel that this goal can be achieved by a wide and ethnically diverse range of users given its Eurocentric stance, its terminology ('civilized' and 'uncivilized' nations) and glorification of colonial enterprise?

**Práci tímto** ⦿ **doporučuji** ○ **nedoporučuji** k obhajobě.[2]

Datum: 12. ledna 2024

Podpis: *B. E. Higgins*

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[2] Výsledná známka zahrnuje hodnocení posudku vedoucího práce, hodnocení posudku oponenta a hodnocení výkonu studenta v průběhu obhajoby.