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[[http://howtonotsuckatgamedesign.com/?p=3377](#)] by Anjin Anhut.

This article is filed under [game criticism](#) and [game semiotics](#).

About Gears Of War 3 And Genocide:

Epic Games delivers a finale filled with fascism, genocide and hate, and sells it as a victory story. But maybe that is exactly what the target audience needs right now.

A serious view on Gears Of War's mythology and its disturbing conclusion. And a try at making sense of it all. No cursing, no sarcasm, rhetorical questions or hyperbole. But some spoilers and strong words.



This was a pretty hard article to write for me, because I have a hard time wrapping my head around the idea of somebody finding the way the trilogy ended appealing. To me it was just offensive and disturbing. The only way I see to possibly find any satisfaction from this ending is from an American perspective. A perspective I have no actual insight into.

The mythology of Gears did put me as the player in a position I'm not at all comfortable with. I did my fair share of virtual kills and fatalities, accepted many stereotyping enemy clichés as entertaining cannon fodder and allowed myself to even dwell in pretend misogyny. Sometimes without caring much and sometimes by being able to put aside the socially questionable or downright wrong implications of video game narrative.

Gears of War 3 made that impossible for me. I was disturbed by the way the story ended and felt like I was playing a villain all the time but nobody told me. Where I was hoping for redeeming value I was answered with confirmation of unimaginable and unrelatable sentiments.

Four things need to be discussed:

1. the strong analogy of the Gears v Locusts conflict to US wars
2. the final solution for the Locust problem
3. the justification attempts for the final solution
4. the explicit and conscious rejection of reason

1. analogy

Here are a couple of major plot points and motifs that make Gears Of War analog to US war conflicts.

Gears are exclusively US citizens:

Language, names, iconography and ethnic mix make the Gears to be a stylized mirror image of US citizens. What could have been a cultural mix or something vague, is defined to be distinctively US American. Strongest represented by the characters of Cole and Dizzy. Cole is an American Football playing and ebonics speaking black character. And Dizzy is a caucasian character wearing a cowboy hat, speaking with a strong texan accent and is shouting "Yeee-Haw!" from time to time.

War over immulsion:

Humans in search of immulsion, a valuable liquid fuel source to be found underground, invaded and damaged the cave habitat of the Locusts, forcing them to head to the surface. The immulsion pumping stations also get destroyed by the final solution machine in the end, defining the greed for immulsion as a root of evil. The characters refer to the war as a "war over immulsion" critically.

Waging a "war for oil" is a popular subject for criticism against the US engagement in war against Iraq under President George W. Bush.

9/11 Trauma:

When the war over immulsion escalates, Locusts resort to attacking human cities, killing large numbers of civilians and making sky scrapers collapse. The invasion of the Locust territory (in GoW 2) as a response to the attacks against human cities is directly analog to the invasion of Afghanistan as a response to the attack on New York.

"We are taking the fight to them."

Tolls of war:

The world of Gears is a former prosperous Nation being emotionally and economically wrecked by years of ongoing conflict and the public (so called Stranded) are distrustful towards the military leadership. Since 2001, the US is entangled in wars, the Afghanistan war being on for the full 10 years now. Economic dire straits, personal human suffering due to drafts, fear of terrorist attacks and a distrust in government are a result of that.

Connecting the dots:

Putting the image of the Gears, the timeline of unfolding events in the war, the immulsion motif and the terroristic nature of the Locusts together, you get a fairly strong but distorted mirror image of the current political climate and situation surrounding the engagement of US forces in the middle east.

This makes it pretty hard for me to not regard the way the fictional conflict is resolved in Gears3 as a fantasy blueprint to end the current US wars.

2. final solution

I know it's the internet. Bloggers and commenters are playing the Hitler-card like nobody's business. And yeah, usually those people think they are making a point, but just fail by drawing a completely ridiculous comparison between their minor complaint and a unfathomable act of madness and injustice.

But in this case it is the meat of the problem.

"Final solution" (german: Endlösung), for those who don't know, is a euphemism coined by officials of the Third Reich. It was used to sell the idea of completely eradicating the jewish people in Nazi Germany.

The holocaust. If you don't know the history behind that word, look it up. Seriously. I'm a german, I live in Berlin, I know that history.

The Nazis had found a way to basically industrialize the killing of people of jewish heritage (and political enemies) by hunting jews, imprisoning them in work camps and using gas chambers to finally kill them. The goal was to eradicate jews as part of an idea of them being a lower inherently evil race. Genetical distinctions, were used to artificially define an enemy worthy of total annihilation.

And as it turns out, launching a super holocaust to solve the Locust problem, worse and more thorough than anything the Nazis were capable of, is the celebrated victory you achieve when beating the final boss of Gears Of War 3.

Adam Fenix (father of the protagonist) has created a machine that is capable of completely and totally killing off every single Locust on the planet. The blow of the machine reaches every corner of the world and is calibrated to kill off people

and creatures that carry the Locust genes but does no harm to humans. A genetical distinction decides here who deserves to die and who deserves to live.

3. justification

In my view it becomes severely distasteful once the written dialogue in the game starts consciously justifying the genocide.

The character of the Locust queen, currently fighting for her people to not be completely wiped out, asks during the battle: What makes a life of her people less worthy than a human life?

On which Marcus Fenix, our stories hero, simply and confidently replies: They are not people, they are monsters.

The big problem here is... THEY ARE PEOPLE! They are an independent society, with spoken and written language, social structures, cultural treasures, art, architecture forced into becoming a war culture by human intrusion.

Granted they are barbaric and ugly. But that does not make them less than people. Trying to make other races appear to not be real or full people, dehumanizing them is the oldest trick in the book to make justifications for inhumanly behavior. Especially when there are clear visible distinctions like skin color and when the oppressive group can claim the oppressed group to be less civilized.

It is done with prisoners to beat them up, was done with slaves to keep them as property, native americans to drive them from their lands, indigenous people in colonized nations, to african tribes to justify ethnic cleansing, to jews to put them in camps and on and on and on...

Nazis referred to Jews in terms of them being a plague, vermin, pests... ...Gears call their enemy race Locusts.

This is fairly common as a plot device in scifi and fantasy stories, like for example Orcs = evil in Lord Of The Rings and subsequently Warhammer and Warcraft. But in publications like this the makers at least had the dignity to limit acts of violence against enemy races to individuals who have actually shown to be a threat...

But in Gears we should find a sense of victory in killing every single Locust on the planet, no matter if they have done anything wrong yet, no matter the age or personality. They deserve to die because of the wrong genes. This is what Adam Fenix's machine is specifically programmed to do.

4. rejection of reason

After the final battle is won and the machine began the deletion of Locust life, the Locust queen returns to the scene to spell it out for everybody. The is no justice or moral in what the player has fought for. It is just another act of killing.

And while the queen was the only one actually talking some sense, confronting us with the injustice we committed, Marcus takes a knife and stabs the unarmed woman to death, up close and personal. Filled with rage and hatred he says: "That's from Dom and everyone you killed, you bitch!" while she sinks lifeless to the ground.

Objections and back talk will not be tolerated.

You win!

After all that: he gets cheered and celebrated, swelling victorious music plays, he gets the girl, can finally throw away his gun armor and look into the bright future.

I cannot connect being a genocidal hate-filled grunt with being the hero deserving of praise and prizes. But then again I'm from germany and I'm not even in reach understanding how it feels to be an American under the pressure of 10 years of war.

Maybe if Osama Bin Laden had killed 3000 of my people, I could relate with fantasizing to kill him up close and personal and make it hurt, any moral implications be damned. Maybe if I knew someone who lost a limb or his life in Afghanistan, would see my country's economy go downhill or if I had to fear to be drafted again, maybe then I could relate to the fantasy of pushing a button to just making it all go away.

I don't know what it would take to make me find any satisfaction in what I was ultimately fighting for in Gears Of War. But I know I'm far away from that and it is discomfoting to me to see that there is a market to sell genocide.

Please, if you have additional thoughts, add a comment below. I'm really looking for american perspectives on the issue, since the game primarily targets an american audience. What did I miss? What don't I get? Thanks.

38 THOUGHTS ON "GEARS OF WAR 3 AND GENOCIDE"



Le Don

on **May 1, 2013 at 3:07 pm** said:

I found this article and some of the comments very interesting. I think the funny thing is how some of these comments, which are trying to accuse the article for understanding the whole Gears plot wrong, do support the analogie with Nazi-Germany or the American history, especially about 9/11 and the war against terror.

But please keep in mind, that I didn't play any Gears of War. So I'm not judging the games or somethink else. I just have some humble thoughts I want to get out.

Anyway one important aspect of Nazi Germany had been propaganda. It was very important to let people believe, what they do is right. The enemy has to be the evil man, so your own soldiers fight your war. Videogames do this the whole time. When you play a game, you have your commander or someone else, who tells you your targets and the history, that happened, and the killing begins. Just give him some reason to fight, when he needs a reason. But ask one questing to yourself: Who is telling me the history of that war, that is going on? The ones, who gives you the orders.

I wonder how far a player would actually go. Would he even execute humans in a concentration camp? Of course you shouldn't call it 'concentration camp' and 'gas chambers', because the similarities would be to obvious. But do players have borders?

This reminds me of the book The Wave, in which a history teacher tries to teach his students about the Third Reich. The students didn't realize how they changed into a Nazi-class, until the teacher revealed their leader. That is the similarity with videogames, in which the players may not realize, that the orders he is following are terrible wrong.

Spec Ops – The Line did something like this. But it was more about showing the player as a manic psychopath, than questioning the orders giving by an superior commander.

But it is very important to give the player some kind of a alternative to chose, other than not playing the game (50 or 60€ for not playing a game is expensive).

Bioshock is a great example for failing and winning of this comcept. First of you have the puppet following orders. At the first half this is no problem, because the protagonist can't refuse to follow orders and so the player shouldn't have the ability to refuse them. But the game should have ended with the death of Ryan, because after rescued by Tennenbaum and freed of the mind controls, he – the player – still follows orders, although he is suppose to have a free will.

Metal Gear Solid 2 did a better approach on this topic. By hinting the game takes actually place in a virtual reality, the player has the oppurtunity to questing the reality of the game and the game itself. So the player has the chance to free himself of the control, that the game itself – represented by the evil Patriots – tries to achieve on the player. The plot is not changing into a good or bad ending like the predecessor did, but it's more like a choice the player can make for himself.



Lt. Baird

on **April 8, 2013 at 10:25 am** said:

I really can't stress how poorly thought out and written your article are. Also the fact that you must hate life because of how angered you get over the slightest thing. I wouldn't be surprised if nobody ever talked to you in person over fear of offending you due to the slightest action or lack of actions.

I'm just going to highlight some things and then be done with it. Your lack of Gears of War knowledge and the reasoning to make analogies is prevalent in the entire article and many of the other articles you write.

The war for Immulsion is like the war for oil. Just not the most recent one. The Pendulum wars was supposed to be analogous to the Cold War with the COG representing America whilst the UIR represented the Soviet Union.

The Locust invade after the Pendulum wars. When I say after I mean a few days after, like they go topside while the COG were throwing their victory parade not a week later. This is the first time humans have a confirmed locust sighting. There was no other knowledge of the Locust beforehand other than a fairytale of how children were kidnapped in their sleep by boogeymen. Aside from that nothing is known of the Locust but they know everything about us, spending centuries observing us and they wait until mankind is at it's weakest. They waited through the era of silence where mankind was peaceful and flourished knowing man would adapt and survive to war as seen in the pendulum war not a few generation later and then they attacked. They take no prisoners (aside from slaves and processing) and slaughter anything human. They were planning to genocide humans to begin with.

COG are not the good guys. Let me say that again COG ARE NOT THE GOOD GUYS. The creation of the COG was built on ideals of freedom, hard work, and cooperation but turned into a totalitarian state quicker than it was before. That being said the COG is not the people or even society. It's actually a theme on the corruption of power. Chairman Prescott is not elected but rather succeeds after the previous Chairman died. He was worried that his father (a former chairman) would approve of his son becoming Chairman this way. Regardless he's ready to lead, as any good leader he tries to find a way to avoid the war. His forces are devastated especially after recuperating from an already devastating war. The Locust obviously aren't parleying and they show now sign of slowing down their slaughter or even showing an intent as to why they are killing. His advisers begin to tell him they aren't an enemy that can be reasoned

with but a monster.

It takes a lot from Prescott to give the order for the Hammer of Dawn because at this point the COG as well as the other human nations were not fighting a war, but rather losing one. He accepts full responsibility of the reinstatement of Fortification act and the authorization of the world-wide Hammer of Dawn strikes saving his government and cabinet the flak. Soon the power gets abused and we have Prescott created an elitist sanctuary at the end of Gears of War 3. However when Prescott dies you see the remorse his younger self had and somewhat redeems himself by telling the truth even though it will only make him look worse. Prescott is a great anthropomorphized instance of the COG where you see noble intentions, the abuse of power, and the penance taken to redeem/rebuild one's self.

But now to the meat of the discussion. Genocide of the Locust, is it justified or not? Simply put yes. The lack of evidence is too much to deny it's how Time magazine said it's too hard to deny evolution due to the sheer amount of evidence. The Locust were a remorseless murdering machine with the full intention of wiping out the human race. Why? Because of the lambent parasite. So what did the Locust want to do? Get away from the Lambent and take the humans spot on the surface whilst killing all the humans so they didn't have to worry about relocating them. What did the humans do? Try and find a cure. How was the cure going? It was going really fucking well actually and if the Locust had came to us with the problem we probably would have killed the Lambent and saved the humans and the locust.

So in the end there is a cure to the Lambent parasite but unfortunately this cure also kills the Locust not because they're Locust but because they are too far gone with the Lambent infection they will die just like some humans (Lambent infected humans/zombies) will because of their exposure. The machine was never designed for genocide and in fact Adam Fenix tried to save both species but failed.

The ultimatum is either allow a parasite to take control/destroy the entire planet or kill one of two species for the other to live not to mention the one you're killing is tremendously more cruel/vicious and is remorseless whilst the Gears/civilians who fought all this time and maybe some who picked up a gun because they were pushed into a corner (Anya and Dizzy, yes Dizzy is one of those people because aside from the stereotypical country guy, he is actually a good hearted man who got conscripted in Gears so that his wife and kids could have something to eat and a place to stay) are traumatized by the lifetime of war and only seek solace just like in the events that preceded the first era of silence. That is the redeeming quality all humans have and is prevalent in the Gears series just as well showing that although evil at times we are generally good unlike the Locust who solely obeyed their queen and naturally extremely violent.



Wardog

on **October 26, 2012 at 6:07 pm** said:

I'm no Gears of War fan. I looked at the ending and I can only conclude they were going for moral ambiguity and even then there was a lot of fumbling along the way. The ending is hardly A New Hope, though at times it apes it to draw the comparison. It has a very sombre yet schizophrenic tone, again very ambiguous and a lot of mixed messages.

Ultimately, I have to call it a poor man's version of Starship Troopers. That film was polemic, this ending takes that idea and cranks it up to eleven with only a vague understanding of what made the original film polemic.

I have to note that Marcus stabbing the Locust Queen closely resembles the climax of Do The Right Thing and in that sense, the two stories' seem to hold a shared theme. The main difference here is that Spike Lee chose to end the film by quoting Dr. King jr. explicitly explaining the moral of the final moments, that justice, progress, equality, freedom, acceptance, happiness, respect and peace, none of them can be attained through violence. Gears of War chose to let the players come to their own conclusions and that was probably very irresponsible of the writers.

The ending's problems look like the result of indifference and carelessness. For this there is no excuse in artistic expression. It just strikes me as a massive shame that so little effort was made to refine that ending. It could have been an amazing statement in our culture. It could have been a cornerstone in mankind's long road to progress. It could have said so much about the truths of war, hate, fear, the human condition, suffering, heroism and loss. Instead, it's just flounders manically and babbles incomprehensively and nobody leaves any wiser.



Dennis Redmond

on **February 18, 2012 at 9:38 pm** said:

As an American who studies media cultures around the world, there's an insider story about "Gears" which won't necessarily be obvious to folks from other cultures.

Surprisingly, the storyline of "Gears" has very little to do with contemporary neocon ideology or the ghastly Terror War. I say this because I grew up on a steady diet of US Imperial narratives and films, so I know the markers of those things very well. But "Gears" is actually about a very different period: the foundational violence of the US Empire.

Strip away all the sci-fi hocus pocus silliness, and the story is this: the colonizers are US white Americans, the Locust are Indians/Mexicans (humanoids marked by a combination of land rights and ethnic Otherness), while the Lambent

are Asian immigrants (represented in the game as a threatening, organic yellow fluid which is not even permitted to own property or have a body, but which colonizes other bodies – never mind the fact that it was the white European/US powers who were colonizing Asian countries for the past 500 years, not the other way around). The Locust are potentially citizens, but are too contaminated by Otherness to assimilate, so they're violently written out of the story. The Lambent are biological monsters which can't be reasoned with, the microbiological version of the racist, xenophobic fiction of the Yellow Peril taking over America. All must be excluded for Imperial whiteness to flourish (Cole is there only as the token African American soldier who serves the Empire, similar to the real-life "buffalo soldiers", African Americans who served in the US armed forces during its wars against Mexico and the Indian First Nations).

Of course, they had to market it as a Terror War fable, in order to boost US sales, and that's why some of the less credible plot points were shoehorned in. But basically "Gears" is a reactionary Western with chainsaws.



Skiri-ki

on **November 4, 2011 at 9:26 pm** said:

Hey Anjin,

Nice article and interesting discussion. I haven't played any Gears, nor do I have an Xbox, but I find these kind of moments in games and also movies or other forms of storytelling an interesting point to discuss. I read up a synopsis of the plot and I think I can side with your and Jorge's conclusion here.

The analogy seems legit and the ending kinda rough but you can't blame the authors for accidentally having written it as a glorification of genocide or fantasies of such. With all the hints at the injustice they throw at you, it was pretty much intended to create some strong dissonances for the player to wrap his mind around. I'd rather think they wanted the player to reflect on the actions and what they relate to in real life and see the injustice there, where the conclusion the game presents, actually seems viable for some.

Can't judge on how effective that was though since I haven't played it. So from my point it sounds like they had the right intentions but ended up with writing to bad to be effective.

Also, as far as analogies go, am I the only one drawing the connection between the name Locust and the word HoLocaust? I dunno maybe I'm too paranoid or a bad writer but that's exactly the kind of screwup-word I would come up with if I wanted to hint at something. (The very reason I'm careful around fictional religions/ethnicities starting with C, M, I or J)



Deepthroat

on **October 23, 2011 at 5:46 am** said:

thanks for the reply anjin i hope it didn't sound like i was trying to insult u or the my words had an angry tone to them ... i just completely disagree with the points in this article so much so it felt like a reach i do agree with the sentiment that no gene pool should be completely wiped out, but if adam phenix had more time maybe the locust would've survived. He had to make a difficult decision and he choose humans. He actually says what u a saying in the article " i just wish there was time to save the locust"



Anjin Anhut

on **October 23, 2011 at 2:24 pm** said:

@deepthroat No, worries. I did not think the tone of your comment was objectionable at all. And even if there is a harsh tone involved, my article wasn't very subtle either. It would be kinda hypocritical of me to not accept some heat for what I wrote.

Regarding Adam Fenix, yeah, he kinda reflects in many moments, how I would have preferred the lead character to treat the issue. Many responses to my article refer to Adam to argue against my reading of the ending. I appreciate how much attention and weight Adam's sentiments get from players and it shows to me that those sentiments are somewhat preferred by the players. Though I really think they should have had Marcus share any of the views and doubts of his father, since he is the main emotional vehicle of the story.



Joseph4th

on **October 12, 2011 at 3:31 am** said:

We faced a similar criticism when we (Westwood) released Lands of Lore. The player was given a choice to side with one of two races, Xeobs and the Knowles, and then it basically has you killing off the race you didn't side with. That bit

of the game was lambasted by Scorpia in Computer Gaming World magazine. Lands of Lore didn't specifically say, "whip this other race off the face of the planet." It just had you then adventure in the lands of the other race, they were hostile, and killing off your enemies is what you did (do) in video games. Looking back on it, it can kind of be seen as highlighting the issue of mindless killing of enemies, because there was that story element where you had to pick a side. Though it wasn't and it didn't, but thinking back on it it would have been really worked if it did so.

The only thing that I am going to call you on is, "Maybe if Osama Bin Laden had killed 3000 of my people." I think you should have said "countrymen" instead of "my people," but my point is still the same. People are people and he killed them regardless of which country they were born in. Speaking of countries people were born in, Karen Traviss is a science fiction author, and full-time novelist from Wiltshire, England. She is the person who wrote the story and isn't an American and Osama Bin Laden didn't kill 3000 of her countrymen either.

I am right with you on this though, am also dismayed that is how they ended the story for exactly the points you bring up, and I do happen to be an American. I should mention that I haven't played Gears of War 3 and am basing this opinion entirely on your article.

Kind of related, I recently watched a youtube video "SA@TheDC – Assassinating the Constitution" and was lamenting the celebrations of the killings of Osama Bin Laden and al-Awlaki. I understand the serious dangers of what would happen if these people were tried in court, the martyr status and how it could be used to incite further violence, but I have to balance that against giving any government the power to kill somebody without over-site despite how much that person deserves to be killed.

"Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them?"

-Joseph-



Anjin Anhut
on **October 12, 2011 at 3:56 am** said:

@Joseph

Hey... frist, thanks for chiming in.

Yeah, you're right with the "my people" choice of words, I fell into the trap myself. And something like "countrymen" would have been the better choice of words in hindsight.

If you haven't played gears3 yet, give it a try. The elements of the story I highlighted are, as it is in the nature of highlighting, selective. Maybe you get another vibe from it. In the comments here I got some other perspectives on what conclusive sentiment got delivered by the ending. So, maybe it's worth checking out. Also Gears3 is a fun game to play.

Regarding real killing like with al-Awlaki and Bin Laden, yeah it's kinda not cool to not sacrifice the concept of laws and rights, to achieve at least conceived justice. But that's a whole different level of discussion in my view. In fiction it's questionable message, in reality it's questionable action.



Siobhan
on **October 12, 2011 at 2:57 am** said:

P.S. this kind of critical analyses is truly absurd. Will we analyze the meaning behind Rebecca Black's Friday next? Because really that is what GoW equates to.



Siobhan
on **October 12, 2011 at 2:55 am** said:

These points on story are all, in my opinion, correct. I have always believed that the best games are those with engaging and smart narratives (my favorites: Bioshock, Half-Life). On the other hand a game is a game and it must be fun to play. Gears of War and all of its versions are fun. Epic did that right. Believe me gamers have standards and games like GoW meet those standards. I urge people to critique why that is, what did they do right? Why waste time analyzing every detail that is sophomoric and immature from a narrative we all already agree has zero depth. I KNOW this game has terrible writing, we don't play it for its intellectual points. GoW's narrative is juvenile, poorly thought out, and shallow. I for one am okay with that. Its a fun game, I'm still enjoying it, and that's that.



Anjin Anhut

on **October 12, 2011 at 12:54 am** said:

@Jorge

Nice! Putting Marcus on the long list of death-bringing creations of Adam Fenix is actually very clever. And you are right that genocide by the protagonist to me is nothing I take lightly. Acts of violence in stories to me either need to be somewhat justified (necessary force, rightful vengeance, self defense) or punished, ...or something in between. Especially when I'm put in the role of the perpetrator of that violence.

And the weight of the violence needs to be balanced by the weight of the justification or punishment... And considering how heavy a fully executed genocide is, I felt that EPIC treated the justice part way too lightly.

Or I'm allowed to turn my brain of ad just go on a rampage. That's fine with me too. But that they did not want either. EPIC somehow wanted me to grasp the injustice and roll with it.

Anyway, great discussion. The discourse we had is exactly why I wrote this article. I don't publish my opinions to just bitch around. I had a strong opinion and wanted to grind and clash that opinion with others, to develop a better understanding.

Thanks.



Jorge Albor

on **October 10, 2011 at 9:59 pm** said:

Great response, but I still think I would disagree with your reading of Marcus. One of the reasons I like Adam Fenix in this particular game is because of how he shapes who Marcus is. I think its clear in his statements that all he can create is death that this also refers to Marcus himself, that he shaped his son to be another arbiter of death. For me at least, this isn't just a tragic aspect of Adam's character, but also a tragic part of Marcus. I think the game, through Adam, asks us to look again at who we are as the protagonist, at all the violence we've committed, and second guess our assumption that all this violence we've committed is in any way glorious.

I kind of find it surprising you felt the game actually rewarded and praised Marcus. Getting the princess might be a bit over the top in a scene in which Marcus looks genuinely suicidal. Nothing about his posture, the way he immediately leaves the crowd, or the way that rubble and charred environment frame the backdrop, come off to me as "rewarding." I also didn't read Marcus as embracing, or at least enjoying, the act of genocide. Our protagonist appears to me a seriously damaged man who just wants the war to be over, to not have lost his friends and loved ones. In many ways, I think he is destroyed by himself, although not physically.

Throughout the game, Marcus struggles with the destruction humans brought onto themselves, particularly in Char, a relatively somber chapter in which our protagonist seems to feel a great deal of remorse. Even when following our protagonist, this just doesn't seem to glorify war to me at all. His behavior to the Locust is correctly described as appalling, as I believe it is meant to be. His views towards the locust have been shaped by his experience and turned him into a killer, and this is not something the game idolizes, as I see it. Just because Marcus is the protagonist, does not mean we have view him as our personal hero. While I don't think the game accomplishes this perfectly (the "shit yeas" and machismo is just too much), I do think the intention by the Epic writers was to create a morally tainted protagonist. Film and literature has offered unlikeable protagonists for years, yet games are still struggling with this approach. Clearly it didn't work for you, but I don't think Marcus is meant to be a "role model" by any means, quite the opposite in fact.

I think a major point of departure is simply your thoughts on genocide in storytelling. You are right that for this particular story, saying that peaceful efforts didn't work or that the there was just not enough time to adapt the machine to only kill lambent is a form of justification, a game contrivance so as not to solely depict a band of hate-mongering killers. That being said, they are trying to tell a story in which genocide is an ugly and morally questionable act, even when one feels that have to commit genocide. It sounds like no justification for genocide could satisfy you, and that's fine. Personally, I enjoy the moral dilemma the game constructs, and its devastating conclusion. I'm fine with your dissatisfaction with the story (it's certainly not perfect, the writers could have fleshed out the Locust far more than they did.), but to paint the writers as genocide apologists, creators of a game that tells American's its ok to commit genocide if you are convinced the other is a murderous non-human, is to undermine the story they were at least trying to tell. An uncomfortable story certainly, which is was meant to be, but a brazen one considering the genre they find themselves.



Anjin Anhut

on **October 10, 2011 at 1:31 am** said:

@Jorge

A big thanks for your long write up. It's thoughtful and well written, like your post on popmatters is. I also appreciated the open tone, phrasing our disagreement, as "reading it differently". And you are right we are reading it differently, very differently actually.

Addressing your points:

1. To be fair, the intrusion by humans is more accidental and was not some sort of invasion. It wasn't an act of aggression but still a damaging act kicking off a series of violent events. The goal with this argument is not to give blame to humans, no "you asked for it", but to me it was important to state that the story is not the usual alien invasion plot, and that separating the good guys from the bad guys is not a clean cut. Not clean enough to feel good with a species wipe-out anyway.

But yeah, I can see how me skipping on the details of the timeline can make it look like I was artificially trying to lay burden on the human faction.

2. Your telling of the actual intended functions of the machine are correct. In my reading this doesn't change much. It is specifically stated by the queen and Adam Fenix, that with more time Adam would find a way to make the effect of the weapon not that harmful to locusts.

In the final battle the queen has just one demand: give Adam more time to save her people. This is rejected by Adam, due to time constrains from his enhanced infection with the lambent. But he atones for it, dying by his own invention. I would be fine with that. The locusts just becoming one additional victim of this war by the attempt of the architect of so much suffering to make things right again. Would be a solid combination of tragic outcomes plus new perspectives and hopes for the future. (actually this was what i was hoping for.)

But then there is Marcus Fenix, the protagonist:

The queens demand is violently rejected by Marcus Fenix, who actually just wants the locust die as much as the lambent. He does not atone for anything, he becomes the champion of his people and gets the princess. We are him, Gears of War is centered around him, he is on the covers, he is the role model of this fable, our agent and avatar. He fights for this machine to be launched so all lambent and all locust just die, because "they are no people, they are monsters" and "my brother is dead". That's his motivation, that's the final opinion we are left with and that is the point of view that the writers decided to reward.

3. See 2, Adam Fenix wants to make things right, in the process kills a lot of his own people and wipes out two other species. And finally willingly accepts the somewhat poetic justice of being destroyed by his own creation. I'm totally fine with how Adam Fenix is written. He does not represent Gears Of War, Marcus does.

Regarding "peaceful methods have failed". Stuff like that in stories is not just happening. The writers decided the peaceful methods to fail, to justify their genocide idea. It's not a thing for me to make me give any leeway to the writers. It's a plot device. Even if you wanna give weight to that argument, peaceful methods have only failed so far. Regarding the locusts to follow a genocide mentally also, doesn't matter at all. Genocide against the Nazis would have been uncivilized too. Just because somebody is evil to you, becoming evil in return is still, $\ddot{A} \ddot{U} / \ddot{N} - \ddot{a} \ddot{u} / \ddot{N} - \ddot{a} \ddot{u}$ evil.

I see all your points and I actually didn't miss any of the aspects of the narration you mentioned here.

But I don't find an actual new perspective in your views. Your view to me neglects who the main messenger is and focusses on a character who is not made out to be a relatable figure for the player. Adam is a side character, maybe nothing more than a talking McGuffin, somebody introduced to us in the last minute of the the trilogy, unplayable, an old man and dying before the story concludes. You pick and choose the sentiments you find to have redeeming value and expand them to be representative of the whole mythology. That's not how it works.

There is a defined hero in this story. Marcus is the main vehicle of the plot and the definitive identification figure for the player. Adam is a side character, a good one, but a side character. It would have been easy for the writers to make Adam's struggle and moral difficulties an actual pillar of the mythology, just by having Marcus sharing any sort of doubt, struggle, even discomfort with the genocide option or by making Marcus an agent of destruction, later getting destroyed by himself (like they did with Adam). But they didn't. They set up an narration in which some characters felt like genocide is an option, difficult or not, and have the protagonist just embrace it. ...and then they had the audacity to reward the genocide embracer.



Andrew V.

on **October 10, 2011 at 12:22 am** said:

To echo Jorge, Anjin, you did misinterpret the nature of the lambent and the locust. I have personally played about 20 minutes of Gears, but I couldn't help but check out the zeitgeist (Great German word there, by the way) through youtube.

While the Locust are a sentient race, they are infected with an organism called the Lambent. Making the Oil=Evil idea very literal, in the Gears universe Immulsion is a disease carrying fuel (bullshit science, I grant) that, itself, destroys the world. The Lambent, as we see in the infected humans and possibly the infected Locust, makes the host go crazy, become violent and feral, like many a "zombie" virus in popular fiction.

Because of this reality, wiping out the locust becomes more of a moral quandary of destroying a greater evil (a disease that will destroy all life) while also killing any of the organisms that it has infected.

Now, Adam Fenix wrestles with this long enough to let the locust invade Sera, refusing to kill them all until it is arguably

too late. Marcus Fenix is a stupid, bull-headed soldier with little to no moral understanding. He kills the Locust queen for revenge and doesn't care about the wider moral questions.

That sucks. It sucks that the final act in the trilogy is pointless and violent. It sucks that the main character is thoughtless and brutish. It does not rise to satire as this act is lauded within the universe. Gears does not succeed at its attempts to criticize the world.

But, it does at least try. It tries to be deeper and more interesting. I respect it for that.



Brett

on **October 9, 2011 at 9:41 am** said:

To Private Name, you do realise the "it,Äö/Ñ/¥s you or them that,Äö/Ñ/¥s going to walk away live" thing is a part of the fantasy? Gears didn't write itself, the rules of the world didn't come pre written. (Well... that's another discussion) It's taken a complicated situation where the US side is by no means blameless, drawn an analogy and then rewritten the rules so that genocide is a simple and somehow justifiable option. The fantasy is the 'we have to kill every last one' idea, because it takes away blame.



Anjin Anhut

on **October 9, 2011 at 9:45 am** said:

@Brett

That's the whole deal in ONE SENTENCE! Spot on.



Private Name

on **October 9, 2011 at 9:08 am** said:

You've got to be kidding me, right? I'm an American and I'm sorry to say your entire article is way off. If you listened and/or played the other Gears Of War games, you'd realize that the Locust call themselves the Locust and are the ones attempting to kill all humans in an attempt to get land since the Lambent has forced them out of their homes. Also, Adam Fenix's weapon was made to kill all Lambent(Something like zombies, it was a parasite that infected both Locust and Humans.) that happened to harm Locust. Anyways, if you're on a battlefield and the other side wants you dead so that it can live, and you won't live unless they're dead, you bet your life you'll be fighting. In other words, it's you or them that's going to walk away live.



Jorge Albor

on **October 9, 2011 at 8:54 am** said:

First off, a very interesting and well written post. I love ingenuitive and non-traditional readings of games, particular major titles. However, I have some counter-points and alternative readings that make the game far more palatable for me personally. I'll try to bring them up in a logical way according to your piece.

1. I absolutely agree the immulsion story line is an intentional criticism of mankind's thirst for oil and the self-destruction such behavior foments. However, I don't think the analogy fits as strongly as you suggest. Your article mentions that the human's hunger for immulsion damaged locust caves and forced them to head to the surface. To be specific, except for a few exceptions, no one knew the locust were underground to begin with and damage to the cave habitat had little to do with their war. Immulsion mining somehow (upsettingly ambiguous, I know) released the lambent, which resulted in a pseudo-civil war between the Locust and the Lambent. They made the conscious decision to head to the surface and to destroy all the human so as to claim the surface of Sera for themselves, allowing them to continue their struggle against the Lambent. The difference is minimal to your argument perhaps, but I think it's important to, at the very least, redirect our reading of the war for oil analogy.

2. Adam Fenix did design a machine that would kill off all creatures infected with the Lambent. Your article mentions that is does not affect humans, and therefor acts as a genocidal killing machine against the Locust. It's important to note that the machine does in-fact kill humans as well, but that unfortunately, all the locusts have already been infected with the Lambent, while not all the humans have. The genocide of the Locust is not the goal but the by product machine that is meant to kill the Lambent.

3. Justification: This is a major point of departure between my reading and yours. While the game does technically "justify genocide," it is not doing so lightly. Adam Fenix mentions at several points that he did his very best to find a

peaceful solution with the Locusts. He also tried to develop the machine so that it kills only Lambent and not Locusts at all. It was his express desire NOT to commit genocide. He felt as though his hand was forced when the Lambent infestation (and it does appear to be a viral infestation, not a sentient creature) became too great. As Adam sees it, and I believe the game at least wants this to be made clear, he is making a terribly difficult decision between committing genocide and allowing genocide to be committed against everyone, human and locust alike. He mourns the way in which his works have led to violence, and at least as I read it, truly regrets being unable to find another solution. I think he has far more in common with Oppenheimer than with Hitler.

Additionally, it should be said that the war against the Locust is not so clear cut as you describe. Peaceful methods to resolve the conflict, at least according to Adam Fenix, have failed. Also, while the Locust may be sentient creatures with moral worth, they still condone genocide themselves. Myrrah specifically uses the same rhetoric, and does seek to wipe out the human race and maintain her fascist domain. Of course this doesn't justify real world genocide (and nothing can), but the ethical quandary Adam Fenix finds himself in regarding both the Locust and the Lambent is not an easy one, and I don't think it is depicted as such. He made a constrained decision to employ his machine, and whether or not you would rather abstain from genocide and let the Lambent do it instead, I think question is a moral one that is treated with some tact in the game.

As I read it, the Locust genocide is a tragic outcome of a defensive move against the Lambent. This is my second major point of departure from your reading. I don't think the game glorifies war or genocide (although certainly there are minor celebratory moments during battle). Myraah, as you say, does call out what they've done as purely destructive, and we as viewers are meant to agree with her, because we already know Adam Fenix certainly does. Marcus's killing blow came off more as a sad attempt to get some kind of vengeance from a person made of death and killing, its the only death he can actually be satisfied with. From Cole's home town to Char, the game reminds us exactly how destructive man kind can be, how our own efforts to wage peace can result in pure devastation. I don't think the COGs are put on any sort of moral high ground. At game's end, it's not a major victory for Dom, it's a tragedy. War appears gritty, horrible, inglorious, and regrettable. You stated you were "disturbed by the way the story ended and felt like I was playing a villain all the time but nobody told me." I think you are right, as an agent of war, you were an agent of villainy, but I think the game was trying to tell you. Apparently it failed, but where you see "a fantasy blueprint to end the current US wars," I see a melancholy warning, a reminder that violence should always be a last option, and even then, it should never be glorified.

I consider myself pretty sensitive to these issues. They interest me greatly and clearly I love writing about them. I think your piece was generally great, but it saddens me you read the story differently than I. I think Epic put together a war story that really stands out from other violent shooters and I found it both daring and refreshing in many respects.

ps: I also wrote more extensively about my thoughts on Gears and glory here (<http://www.popmatters.com/pm/post/149260-/>) if you're interested. Maybe it'll help get my point across better.



Phobosis

on **October 7, 2011 at 1:25 pm** said:

Very interesting article and nice comments.

First I'd like to note that even if silliness really does exclude any serious author's intention, it still is a reliable insight to author's unintentional part of the psyche. For examples just take a look at American post-ww2 pop culture, be it comics, movies or even ads. Many are silly for sure, but issues of that time (racism, sexism, power fantasies, you name it) are apparent there. So I believe Gears of War qualifies for serious analysis despite it being over the top fantasy.

I suspect genocide theme itself isn't specially tied to particular events in history. I suppose extermination of the enemy is just one of the survival strategies, hard-wired into our brains by evolution. From nature's point of view it isn't any worse or better than other strategies (running away, pacifying, scaring or avoiding enemy). Even while we occasionally pity mice or rats and don't want to destroy them as a species, we don't have any problem with exterminating germs and viruses, and even more so being living organisms ourselves we don't even consider the term 'extermination' could be applied to non-living things, whatever life could mean.

What I mean we sometime act according to one program, and sometimes according to another, and often the switch from one program to other can be invisible to us. What alarms me is not that such concept as genocide exists, but that the 'levers' that switch us to strategy of maximum violence are so exposed and so easy to flip.

I don't think Gears are seriously built up on particular part of American history, they just appeal to natural, instinctive reaction to the danger. There's no time to empathize with predator, so we're made to attack first, think second. I guess the only thing we can do is to keep this sort of behavior in check and make sure under no circumstances to act this way in real life. I wonder if a chance to satisfy this kind of instinct in consequence-free virtual environment instead of repressing it is actually a good thing.



Dennis Kogel

on **October 7, 2011 at 8:30 am** said:

Good analysis!

I was also thinking of Starship Troopers when I read this. On the one hand, I don't think the Gears team (and more importantly: lead writer Karen Traviss) is oblivious to the implications in the plot/lore/universe, I'd say it's fairly conscious. On the other, I'm not too sure whether it gets the point of moral ambiguity as well across as, say, Starship Troopers – or if they even wanted to and it's just as straight-forward genocidal/fascist as it looks.

But perhaps it's the moments where you blast radioactive dinosaurs with space lasers that hint at the tongue-in-cheek-ness, at the the ambiguity and let players think about what the hell they are engaged with. Judging from the response to Gears though...probably not =/

So, thanks for this. It's important.



ON1TZUKA

on **October 4, 2011 at 4:55 pm** said:

Nice article, well written!

Totally agree with you, but in some points:

-I do not really think that only the US kids are the target of this Game, pretty much in all the „civilized“ country, „s kids like those kind of things so you should spread the question to all who liked the plot. And I think the most usual answer will be: „I just play, shoot and kill, I don't even listen to the dialogue, or think about the plot, gameplay is awesome, that's it.“

-Second point, Lord of the rings. It's kind of a cliché that this book is a fascist book. In that case the orcs ARE the „bad guys“ (some of them are created with that intention), the „good guys“ just defend the world from them, and I do not find fair to say that the writer „at least had the dignity to,“.

But for the rest.. you've got the point! Well written!



Dirac

on **October 4, 2011 at 12:20 pm** said:

I had a similar reaction to the story, and the way the Locusts are depicted relative to the humans. I can only wonder if Epic did this deliberately. The actions of the humans are definitely believable, but to treat victory through genocide as wholly heroic seems wrong. The tone of the game makes no effort to tell the story in a way that's not one-dimensional. There's no moral gray areas or second-guessing, and the story seems to be told with a completely straight face.

Moreover, all three games have essentially had you attempt to mass genocide against the Locusts, each time by a different means. In the first game it didn't bother me so much, as you don't know much about the Locusts, but in Gears 2 and 3 they "humanize" the Locusts to a large degree by giving them backstory and culture, it's largely superficial in that even if the player's perception of the Locusts is enhanced, the story never really capitalizes on this to maybe tell a deeper story that touches on complex themes.

Take a film like Starship troopers. Even though the humans are portrayed as heroes, and the bugs portrayed as vicious monsters, there's still self-aware elements of camp, satire, absurdity. Besides the fact that film doesn't take itself too seriously, there does seem to be some effort to indicate how the humans are just as messed up — brutal, torturous, somewhat fascist, reliant on propaganda, etc. The humans are the protagonists but not the good guys per se. While that may not be immediately obvious, it's definitely there. You can tell the writer(s)/directors were hardly oblivious to it, which, disturbingly, is not the vibe I got from Gears 3.



Anjin Anhut

on **October 4, 2011 at 12:34 pm** said:

@dirac

The comparison with Starship Troopers is spot on! Yeah, Starship Troopers basically delivering a similar conflict and set up, show the humans to be a military fascist culture with little respect for the individual person and a big layer of american stereotyping on top. From earliest moment on Starship Troopers makes obvious it does not want your approval. Irony, criticism and camp are layered thick in this movie. The humans are the questionable characters in the film, while the bugs are just a plot device, a force of nature.

Gears was so straight and serious about their total war scenario. Hmpf. Yeah, great comparison. Thanks for that.



HURAROG

on **October 2, 2011 at 4:47 am** said:

You might as well be talking about the violent content in Independence Day, or Day of the Dead. Suppose zombies feel pain?



HURAROG

on **October 2, 2011 at 4:41 am** said:

Speaking of narratives, you've neglected one that is much more potent in the American Psyche.

The Second World War might have been a big turning point for you Germans, but the repercussions of that conflict was barely felt over here. I've met high school students who don't know we fought a war with Japan (Which makes me fear for the state of education in this country but it illustrates how little that event matters in daily life.)

On the other hand, EVERYBODY knows about the Reds. For almost 50 years, american conservatives railed against the rising influence of communism, our parents were raised believing that a nuclear war was coming. Wars with North Korea, with China, with Cuba, with Vietnam. Famous wars that destroyed millions and a million tiny wars in every backwater on the face of this planet. Wars in orbit and Finally, Behind all of this, the long dreaded, all-consuming, Final War.

Sound familiar?



Anjin Anhut

on **October 2, 2011 at 5:07 am** said:

@Hurarog

Yeah, the I recognize the cold war to be a big and potent narrative. Many scifi stories circled around that in the 80s, especially many of the post-apocalyptic movies like the Road Warrior series. Though I found the more current wars to be more analogous to the narrative in Gears 3. Do you see a strong connection here?

One important difference between the complete species wipeout in Gears 3 and violence in zombie stories is, that all the zombies who get shown to get hurt also posed a threat within the story. We got the generalization of races and species to be just plain evil a lot in scifi and fantasy. Take zombies, but also take vampires, aliens, orcs, uruk hai, mutated animals and of course Locusts. Fine. But if there would be a story that would resolve itself with the complete total annihilation of such entities I would take offense with that also.

Those races must have individuals who have not yet done something wrong or at least show potential to become something productive... killing those individuals isn't just. So in all those stories I need to actually see them to be a threat before they get killed and most stories satisfy this need. But in Gears 3 we get a complete sweep of killing including many individuals who probably never have hurt anybody. Locusts must have younglings and there must be working individuals taking care of building the impressive architecture and such. Also the prospect of this barbaric nation becoming something worthwhile gets killed with the ending of Gears 3 too. Not cool and not comparable to incidental violence against zombies.



HURAROG

on **October 2, 2011 at 4:12 am** said:

The last Gears ended with the player blasting a giant radioactive Dinosaur with a space lazer from a helicopter. The dinosaur exploded because it stepped in the glowing radioactive goo. Every Gears ending has had a retarded, tacked-on ending.

You're assuming that the Gears Team is all on the same page on the story here. In Gears 2, you had the game spasming between dumb high school jock banter, a sob story about Dom's wife and Gigantic Tonka Trucks ramming Dinosaurs. At one point, you fight a lab full of regenerating zombies who never re-appear in the plot. Each chapter plays out like a comic book. Read some old 30's-era comics and you'll see what I mean. It's total popcorn, and I defy you to find one game that Epic has made which has a serious, deep narrative.



Anjin Anhut

on **October 2, 2011 at 4:28 am** said:

@huradog

Weird, not even considering the ending, I found Gears 3 to have a very serious and deep narrative, thought out

characterizations and moments of genuine emotional impact. To me silliness does not cancel seriousness out. Just because there monsters, gore, over the top action and heavily stylized characters, there is still a meaningful story. Some of the deepest stories I have read, I've found in comics.

Gears Of War is to me none of those "Turn off your brain and have fun games", I always found the narrative to be engaging. That's exactly why the ending threw me off in the way that it did.



HURAROG

on **October 2, 2011 at 3:27 am** said:

You make some valid points, but I had a hard time getting past: "The only way I see to possibly find any satisfaction from this ending is from an American perspective. A perspective I have no actual insight into."

Seriously? Do you think that the ending is supposed to speak to us on a deep level? It doesn't. It's a Deus-Ex-Machina that keeps the game from going on too long. It's a carnival ride, it signifies almost nothing. This game is not a tour-de-force exposition of American Angst, it's junk food.



Anjin Anhut

on **October 2, 2011 at 3:42 am** said:

@Hurarog

Yeah, I actually suspected the story to hit some specific US audience buttons. Though it is just a suspicion and I try to find a threat to make sense of the ending. Because just for it to be junk food, I found it to be too consciously treating the points I made.

I now heard a few voices, after being confronted with my perspective, still referring to it to be junk food or something similar (popcorn entertainment, just fiction ect.) like you did. Which doesn't surprise me. I'm offended by the ending, to you it's just a piece of entertainment, but to someone out there it is something of meaning and emotional satisfaction. And I'm just wondering how there is satisfaction to gain from such a sentiment.

Anyway, thanks for your comment. My attempt at tackling the game from the target audiences perspective is not meant to be offensive.



Dookiestain Lafleur

on **October 1, 2011 at 6:41 pm** said:

Leave it to a German to find Nazis hiding in every bush. It is a video game. Locust are not humans. They do not exist.



Anjin Anhut

on **October 1, 2011 at 8:30 pm** said:

@dookiestain

So as long as the victims are fictional, no harm done, huh?

Well, there are people who care about morals even in virtual environments.

A pity you don't.



Deepthroat

on **October 1, 2011 at 1:33 pm** said:

The ties to the US can be made here (duh US studio). i don't really agree with the genocidal stuff I've seen the ending and if i remember correctly the machine was designed to killed lambent. I pretty sure some locust now there is a certain pilgrims killing indians thing here but genocide really. isn't the ultimate goal of every video game to wipe out the enemy. so in halo when u kill the flood its genocide too then even though there ultimate goal is consume all intelligent life. while would never go so far as too call them heroes the cog are the protagonist for a reason. Why did the locust jump out and start killing people on emergence day hmm? And they are monsters. hell vampires can talk and are civilized. maybe if they were a little more innocent in this i would see your point. Anyone who plays video games knows

plots are painted in black and white. You unusually seen our hero against a pure evil force that he must eradicate. I seriously doubt epic penned this as some deep war history parody. They just needed a way to say to the player were done with locust.

The majority of the entire article seems like a giant reach which is rare for u.



Anjin Anhut
on **October 1, 2011 at 3:40 pm** said:

Hey deepthroat...

Thanks for chiming in. Yeah, I understand that there must be tons of people who don't see that problem as I do. Though I don't think my position is a reach at all.

In all stories you described, there are genocidal tendencies, but they usually never go as far as coming up with a weapon that actually kills the entire enemy race. There is always a way to say everyone we saw dying somewhat personally deserved it.

As for monsters, I would object to a machine that kills off every single vampire as well. Genocide is what makes monsters, not fangs or the urge to eat people. Everything can be dealt with, controlled or healed... except when you actually wipe off an entire gene pool. I found the ending to Daybreakers to be incredible fascist (wont spoil it here, good vampire movie, see it.). I'm from germany, you know a couple of generations ago this nation was crawling with psychopaths, war mongers, committed fascists and mass murderers... and now its a fairly okay nation with cultural treasures and a big part in the world economy. If the US just would have went on bombing the crap out of the third reich instead of actively providing help for the nation's rebuilding, all what is germany now wouldn't exist.

No race or nation can be evil, vicious or deadly enough to justify what happened in the end of Gears3.

Maybe I think too much about this stuff, but somebody needs to start thinking a lot more... especially because it's so parallel to current political tensions and wars...



david
on **October 1, 2011 at 12:38 am** said:

good article. I have not played Gears, I have a PS3 where GoW stands for something else...funnily enough, some would say God of War managed to have you do atrocious things while distancing you from the main character and his actions, it was designed and structured as a greek tragedy (God of War 3, afaik tragically left out those finer points and was simply a mindless celebration of brutality).

So I was wondering if there were any signs that Gears wanted to go in a similar direction and have you (or the main character, rather) do terrible things, but the underlying message being: "violence just breeds more violence, everybody loses" or something along those lines. I doubt it, but since you mentioned the locust queen...

(about God of War: I m aware it s probably not the best idea to have gameplay and story/message contradict each other in a way, but I think it did work somewhat; you could enjoy the gameplay mechanics, while thinking to yourself: "man, kratos is such a poor asshole".)



Anjin Anhut
on **October 1, 2011 at 3:55 pm** said:

@david Thanks for commenting. Well, yeah, I was hoping for Marcus either stand up against the genocide philosophy, getting destroyed by it (as some sort of antonement) or becoming a real antihero. Didn'T seem to be presented in either of those ways to me. : /

@Samuel

Hmpf, accuracy or believability of the public 911 information or perception (and Bin Laden was at least publicly perceived to be the man behind it all) is not relevant to my points here.

My worries also don't much circle around what influence this ending has on the players. Granted their is influence, but I think its a minor factor here. But contemporary fiction is mostly a mirror of current paradigms and desires. And what actually worries me is how there is a fertile ground for genocide fantasies at the moment. Glad you commented.



Samuel Alder
on **September 30, 2011 at 8:35 pm** said:

Very well thought out & articulated article,
good points man!

The thing about video games and their influence is, people really don't think about how they are subtly being shifted more towards this or that way of thinking. It's a "virtual world" it "isn't real", and it "no longer exists after you switch the screen off" is the attitude... but of course, it's an experience, and it stays in your memory. Like any art, it has great power to influence, and it seems maybe the author's take the weight of that responsibility a little too lightly, or are just totally sociopathic.

As for osama having killed 3000 people,

"1. Osama Bin Laden is and was NOT wanted by the FBI for the events of September 11th, 2001.

The reason, according to the FBI's Chief of Investigative Publicity Rex Tomb is

"The FBI has NO hard evidence connecting Bin Laden to 9/11"

Source <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/topten/usama-bin-laden> " Yeah, really.

from my journal.