Repelling the Invasion of the “Other”: Post-Apocalyptic Alien Shooter Videogames Addressing Contemporary Cultural Attitudes

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Abstract

In the current videogame landscape, a great deal of first-person shooters are being made that depict a post-apocalyptic invasion by an “alien” force that must be repelled. Culture in a given context can become preoccupied with certain issues and themes because of the societal situation it is born from. This allegorical function serves to speak to historically grounded contemporary concerns. Many of today’s contemporary concerns are related in some ways to 9/11, and the scholarly works that address the influence this event has had on videogames seem to pay closer attention to games that deal with these issues on an explicit level. This analysis moves past the singular historical event of 9/11 to show how latent long term attitudes and beliefs can be addressed by cultural texts on a more allegorical level. Through looking at the FPS invasion videogame texts themselves, such as the Resistance and Killzone series, it becomes clear that what these games are speaking to is a latent fear and mistrust of those culturally different. Through a fair amount of “Othering,” a steadfast ethnocentric viewpoint, and a reliance on the theme of the justified war, these games speak to contemporary cultural attitudes that are intertwined with the reputation of the US overseas. Instead of addressing these concerns head on, these videogame cultural texts place them within thinly veiled allegories that make explicit the desire to repel the invasion of forces that threaten the Western world.

Keywords

FPS, alien, invasion, post-apocalyptic, ethnocentrism

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Video games, as technological and cultural artifacts of considerable influence in the contemporary society, play an important role in the construction of identities, just as other artifacts (e.g., books, newspapers, television) played for a long time. In this paper, we discuss this role by considering video games under two concepts, othering and technopoly, and focus on how these concepts demand that we deepen our understanding of the ethics of video games. Repelling the invasion of the “other”: Post-apocalyptic alien shooter videogames addressing contemporary cultural attitudes. Eludamos. Journal for Computer Game Culture, 3, 295–308. Google Scholar. Multiculturalism, and post-coloniality. 19 Other games are more easily connected. 15 See Jesper Juul, Half-Real: Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005) and Henry Jenkins, “Game Design as Narrative Architecture,” in First. “Repelling the Invasion of the “Other”: Post-Apocalyptic Alien. Shooter Videogames Addressing Contemporary Cultural Attitudes.” Eludamos. The settings of the post-apocalyptic alien shooter games and even the buildings themselves are a constant reminder to the player of what is important to save in the fight to rid humanity of the invading forces. This spatial element can be seen as a hybrid of a narrative and ludic concern of the videogame texts, because though the settings and buildings play a part in how the story is constructed, they also are part of the physical environment of the game itself. So not only is the player getting to experience a spectacle from the perspective of the shooter, but is also entering into a pact with the game by following the rules. In many of the post-apocalyptic videogames being studied here, the tendency is to depict the