

introskeptive

Chico's Tape 4

TW: Graphic images and discussion of rape and sexual violence

Spoilers for *Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes*

There have been plenty of *Metal Gear Solid V: Ground Zeroes* reviews, some of which have been greatly revered and lauded as brilliant pieces of writing but, barring [the Telegraph's review](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/video-games/video-game-reviews/10710389/Metal-Gear-Solid-V-Ground-Zeroes-review.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/video-games/video-game-reviews/10710389/Metal-Gear-Solid-V-Ground-Zeroes-review.html>), they have all failed to do so much as acknowledge the existence of tape number 4 which depicts rape and child rape.

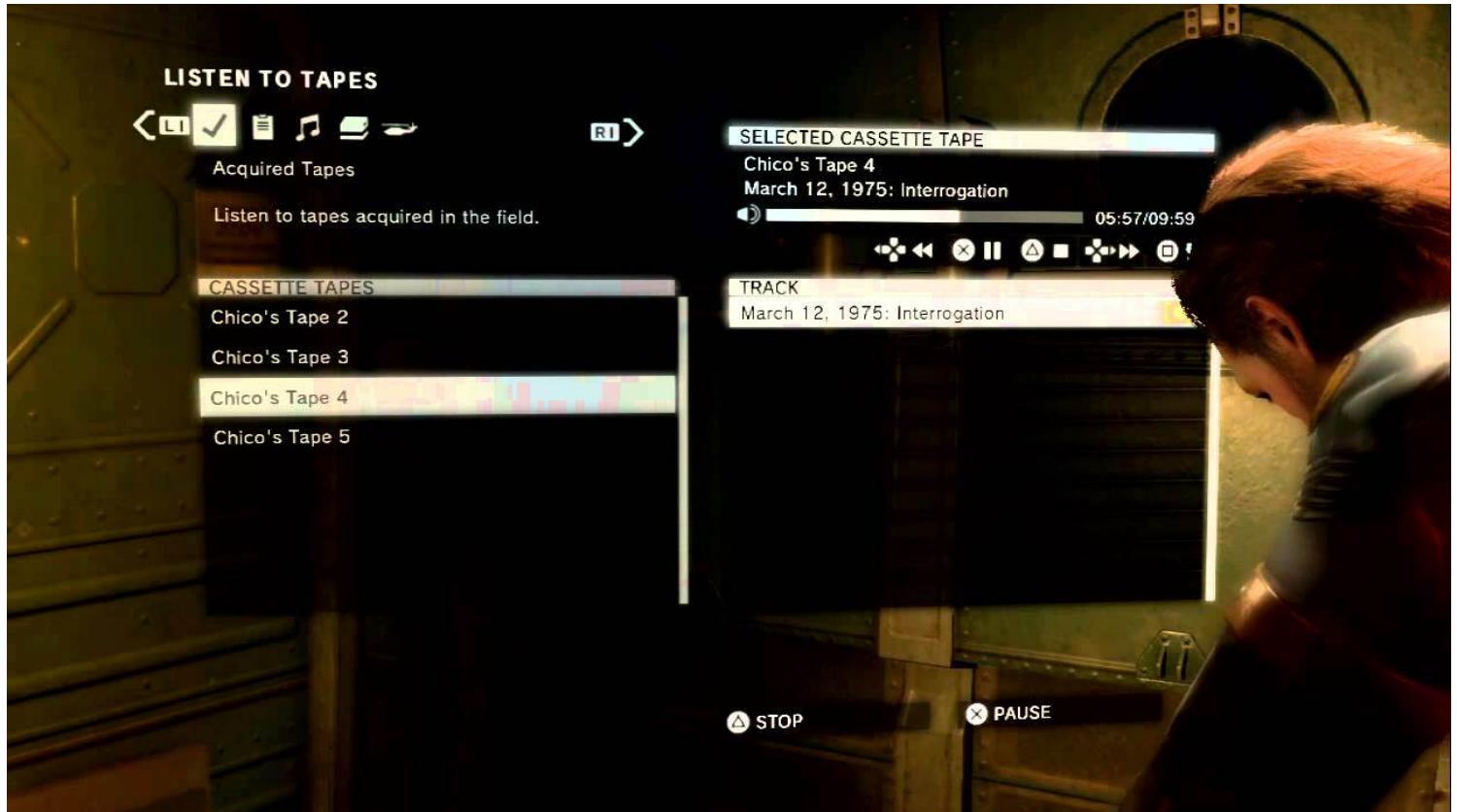
Yes, the same publications that questioned the implied rape in *Tomb Raider*, who were disgusted by the torture scene and sexism in GTAV and raged about the oversized breasts in *Dragon's Crown* didn't think it necessary to highlight the fact that a tape depicting rape is used as a reward for the completion of a mission in *Ground Zeroes*. Or, that in spite of ESRB's inclusion of a sexual violence warning, PEGI have included this under the illusive 'violence' content warning and as such no mention of sexual violence appears on the box or in game.

Instead, publications have focused on dismissing the fact that the main mission can be completed in ten minutes on a speed run and convincing readers not to write it off just yet, it really is worth playing oh and there's even some depth in its depiction of Guantanamo Bay. The length of the game is the main talking point, not the rape or child rape, not the fact that this is used as a reward, not the fact that there is no warning that this will happen. Every other detail of the game engulfs this minuscule, unimportant tape.

It's easy to question the function of sexual assault as a catalyst for story progression in *Tomb Raider*. It's easy to say that the world of GTA is sexist. It's even easier to criticise overtly sexual, even comical, depictions of women. But to criticise Kojima? Someone whose stories we're not supposed to take any notice of and we're supposed to just humour and pat him on the head and say 'It's ok, we don't expect you to tell meaningful stories'. That is, seemingly, extremely difficult.

The tape in question is picked up as an extra during one of the missions, is just under ten minutes long and depicts the torture and interrogation of Paz and Chico and the dual rape of Paz and Chico (Chico is forced to rape Paz but as he's a child and is forced by Skullface into the act, is also

raped by Paz). The thing that immediately jumps out and makes me extremely uncomfortable is the fact that I'm discussing a game which has a character called 'Skullface'. A character who looks like a zombie and seems to be evil for the sake of evil, from a series which is known for its ludicrous, over the top antagonists. This character forces two people to have sex with each other against their will, this caricature is used as a vehicle to incorporate difficult themes like rape and sexual assault into a series which is renowned for being playful and not taking itself seriously.



The tape in itself is a catalogue of poor writing and voice acting, with Skullface's over the top, typical, American 'baddie' voice and the oft quoted series of increasingly disturbing lines, said to Chico after Skullface has stripped Paz. 'Do you like what you see?' It's like...fruit. Does she look sweet or sour? A man has to know these things. Time for a taste test. Either you take her now or you are strung up next.' These all add up to make what could have been an evocative scene, extremely cringe worthy and sickening to listen to as it feels like the subject matter is not being taken seriously in the slightest and is instead, doing its best to create snappy, easily quotable lines of dialogue rather than anything even bordering on meaningful.

It's laden with childish comments from Skullface about Chico needing to become a man and references to Paz as Chico's 'girlfriend' or a girl he's trying to impress. Thereby girling Paz and putting her into the submissive, controllable role of 'girl' and removing her independence as a grown woman and placing Skullface into the familial father role, with Chico fulfilling the role of child and Paz as the mother, controlled and 'girled' by Skullface. This in itself sets the tone for the tape, it's childish. It contains no nuance at all, it's a child's idea of what rape is like. An evil man does an evil thing. It's as simple as that, and of course the woman (or girl) is at least partly to blame as she specialises in 'deception and deceit, what better proof she's a real woman.'

After beating them both, Skullface rips off Paz's clothes and comments to Chico 'Repulsive, isn't it?' Following this it's deliberately unclear whether Skullface rapes Paz but the sound is more like thrusting than punching, and as the ESRB rating said 'a female character is sexually assaulted by male **characters**', it is certainly suggested that he does. Skullface then offers up Paz to Chico, like a piece of food on a plate ready for his consumption with no personal autonomy or voice of her own. This interaction is extremely Oedipal, like the father handing over his sexual, phallic power to his son and allowing him to realise his Oedipal desire for his mother (in this case, with Paz as the role of the mother due to the age gap between Paz and Chico).

When Kojima finally grants Paz a voice she, a 25 year old woman, initiates a sex act with Chico, a 13 year old boy, immediately after they have both been raped. She asks him to move closer to her, seems to kiss him and, in spite of Chico's protestations, asks 'You want to do it here?', heavily suggesting that Paz is initiating sex with Chico. This casts Paz as an evil, deviant, sexually aggressive woman who deserves punishment. This is furthered by the change in her appearance from *Peacewalker* where she had an extremely feminine look, compared to her more masculine, short haired appearance in *Ground Zeroes*, allying her with the male aggressor and making her seem more dangerous (because of course, feminine women can't be dangerous).



Paz in Peacewalker

The whole thing is tacked on, a silly extra that Kojima uses for additional shock value. It has no bearing on the story and is used primarily as a tool to further our idea of Skullface as an evil character and secondly to portray Chico as the ultimate victim and Paz as a perpetrator, erasing her status as a victim and instead casting her as a sexually manipulative woman who, as Skullface says, will 'get what she deserves'. This is particularly potent as it links to both the consequent rape

and ending of the main mission, Skullface deems Paz to be 'the kind of woman you'll want to avoid', which we're pushed to agree with, and he punishes her sexuality by putting a bomb inside her stomach and her vagina.

This captivation with inserting large objects into the only woman in the game is disturbing to say the least. Kojima seems fascinated by putting Paz through as much pain as possible, deemed acceptable to us as a player because of her actions towards Chico, portrayed as the ultimate innocent. With the entirely unbelievable end scene where she's held down by Snake and Chico while a doctor reaches around inside of her as one of them holds her intestines in. It's an extremely ritualistic scene, bringing to mind sacrificial practices. While the extreme violence of the removal of the bomb from her stomach is not entirely believable, Paz's pain is undeniably real and the detail that she's not given any anaesthetic is undoubtedly deliberate, to further enhance the pain she's subjected to.



The scene borders on the pornographic, the build up with close ups of the stitching being slowly removed, moving onto close ups of hands inside Paz's stomach, her blood and intestines glistening in the garish lights of the helicopter lights and of her face as she screams in agony. It's almost as though Kojima revels in the pain she experiences, casting it as a complete necessity – no, there's no time for anaesthetic, maximum pain must be ensured for some unspoken reason.

The only way that Paz can redeem herself of her actions towards Chico and our realisation of her as a sexually manipulative woman and reach salvation, to become accepted by Snake and his team as 'one of the good guys' is to become a martyr and literally destroy her genitals (and her entire body). She saves them from the destruction that her sexuality would otherwise bring and embraces her sacrifice as she dives out of the plane with crossed arms, facing Snake the whole time, able to be at peace with herself in the knowledge that she thinks she's saved them.

I find it extremely distressing that there is no clear warning of the content either on the box or anywhere around the tape which is simply called 'interrogation' and seriously hope that if there is any similar content in *Phantom Pain*, that there will at the very least be trigger warnings on the box. I was already feeling extremely wary about *Phantom Pain*, and the content from *Ground Zeroes* combined with the *Phantom Pain* trailer and Kojima's comments about Quiet, have hardly absolved that pit in the stomach worry that comes to mind when I consider Kojima's reasoning for Quiet's outfit. Right now I have no hope for the way that child soldiers, or any of the female characters in *Phantom Pain* will be portrayed, *Ground Zeroes* has presented no tact or maturity in its representation of tough issues and, unfortunately, I don't expect that to change in the *Metal Gear* series any time soon.

The whole of *Ground Zeroes* is simply a catalyst, a back story for the upcoming *Phantom Pain*. Paz and Chico's rapes function only to further Snake's story, to give him a reason for revenge and to have been in a coma. They are victims for the sake of the progression of another character; the scenes are careless, clumsy and childish. In his desperation to achieve "what movies and novels have achieved" Kojima has created a piece of work that shows complete disdain for the only female character in the game, a fetishisation of Paz's pain and has failed to create any meaningful portrayal of sexual violence.

[April 8, 2014](#) by [introskeptive](#) Categories: [Uncategorized](#) | Tags: [Ground Zeroes](#), [Kojima](#), [Metal Gear](#), [Phantom Pain](#), [PS4](#), [Rape](#), [Sexual violence](#), [XboxOne](#) | [34 Comments](#)

34 thoughts on “Chico’s Tape 4”

[angryfodder](#) says: [April 8, 2014 at 11:35 am](#)

Sounds pretty horrific. Without playing the game, understanding the characters and context, it's hard to comment. Plus I'm confused by what actually goes down here. The MGS games are truly bizarre. They've certainly contained some nasty content/plot points in the past (MGS4 comes to mind). Then you have the sexual objectification stuff, like in MGS 3 where you can press a button to stare at tits/arse. It's all wrapped in quite serious story lines, which delve into ethical and even philosophical areas. They even throw in some comical moments. It's a real mixed bag.

Why is it not mentioned in reviews? I've not read any – so I don't know. However, as a general rule, reviews are meant to be a high level summary of the product. Get bogged down on individual plot points and the review starts to read like a walkthrough and also moves into "spoiler" territory.

[Reply](#)

[introskeptive](#) says: [April 8, 2014 at 11:37 am](#)

That's true, although they did that with GTAV and with games like Tomb Raider, there were A LOT of follow up articles – I've only seen one for *Ground Zeroes* which mainly focused on the ending.

Reply

angryfodder says: April 8, 2014 at 11:59 am

I assume it's just flying under the radar. Some things cause a stir, somethings get ignored/missed. There is little consistency. Complete non-issues, like content that isn't in games but is still in the code create waves if the right people get wind of them.

Chris Leggett (@Leggettron) says: April 8, 2014 at 9:28 pm

Good read! I've wondered the same thing re: the lack of discussion on this particular topic, but my theory is this: the fact that these details are relegated to relatively obscure "collectibles" means that most players simply won't encounter them. Personally, I haven't actually found all of these tapes yet (I'm at 21% completion). In GTAV, Tomb Raider etc, players encounter the more controversial elements in the normal course of the game's main campaign arc. Also, bear in mind the number of reviews that have written Ground Zeroes off as a "two-hour paid demo," and it suggests that a lot of reviews weren't necessarily exhaustive deep dives.

While I haven't personally encountered all of the tapes yet and won't comment on them definitively until I do, what I've heard/read about them doesn't fill me with a lot of confidence that they're justified. I think the very fact that only completionists will likely encounter these details highlights their relative lack of importance to the core story.

introskeptive says: April 8, 2014 at 9:32 pm

Thank you! That's true but I've only found 5/17 tapes and this is tape number 4, found during one of the missions and I'd be extremely surprised if reviewers hadn't found it. I'm certainly not a completionist and haven't played GZ for a seriously long amount of time either. In all seriousness you've probably already picked this particular tape up

sajon says: April 8, 2014 at 10:34 pm

I don't mean this as a defense of the game's content, but I really disagree with these comments that focus on it being "optional" or a supposed "reward" as part of their criticism. I am a narrative designer, and one of the biggest misconceptions about the medium is that optional content is less important than critical path content. Also, unlocking things are just how you parse out content in an interactive, non-linear story. Just because you have to do something to get something doesn't automatically make it a "reward" and therefore intended as pleasurable.

It's quite easy to call out Kojima without having to throw the medium under the bus in the process.

EtTuBrute says: April 20, 2014 at 8:05 pm

I agree wholly with Sajon here. Your take on the matters goes roughly like this: Players progress through game > find further background story > Kojima is a weirdo who pats people on the back by rewarding them with rape stories > a silly line of thought.

I haven't played the game myself, but from your dissection of it I can at least see that one argument as a fallacy.

SG says: April 8, 2014 at 12:56 pm

A likely reason, I think, many outlets haven't talked about the tape is because it's an extra that has to be searched for outside of the main game. And most games writers don't have the time or the inclination to look for it. In Tomb Raider, the pseudo-rape scene is part of the main game, early on and was used in early promotional material for the game. However the distinct lack of coverage and opinion pieces on it is worrying. Is Kotaku ,and the like, really worried about pissing off Konami or a flood of "We've done this subject already, it's nothing to do with games" comments? You'd have to ask the editors.

Personally, I think the insulting way a very real subject is used in such an erroneous way is because Kojima is a terrible writer, who recycles characters and set-ups from movies. And has little to no style, nuance or understanding of character. What happened to Chico is a reflection on the very real situation that hundreds of thousands of child soldiers have been subjected to. But any real context and sensitivity goes out the window when you've got a knock off Bond villain as the perpetrator of it. Paz then initiating sex after is worryingly on par with the kinds of attitudes in films like Straw Dogs- which says, woman always want sex, even if they say no, they'll like it eventually. And that was in the '70s.

Maybe Kojima thinks, because it's audio only and because he adds such woeful , meme-ready, dialogue and OTT, one-note characters it's ok to hint at real war crimes going on today? And it's sad that the way the games industry and games media is, there's been no one (and probably likely never going to be) challenging Kojima and Konami on the subject. Spe-Ops: The Line have shown you can include the real life consequences of warfare in a video game, but that game sets a very specific tone and stuck to it. Kojima either wants to have it both ways or suffers from some kind of arrested development, where he writes like a 14 year old who thinks lots of blood and swearing is the definition of being serious and grown up.

Reply

Pingback: [Hideo Kojima is not the man for the job – sexual assault in Ground Zeroes | Ludonarrative Dissidents](#)

asdaf says: April 8, 2014 at 1:28 pm

I found it in my first palythrough to review the game. Beyond a "OMG a rape scene in videogames" I guess it shows the maturity of contents in the evolution of the industry. Maybe it is time to see the ESRB rating prior to buy a game?

I dont' see any problem with this content in a videogame such as Metal Gear.

Stop pretending that videogames in the XXI century is still about going to save the princess in a fantasy happy world.

Now, that being said, let me go to sit in front my T.V. and watch Law and Order in front of my kids.

Reply

asdaf says: April 8, 2014 at 1:43 pm

Also forgot to mention " I have no hope for the way that child soldiers, or any of the female characters in Phantom Pain will be portrayed" because hey, child soldiers is an invention for a videogame about something that doesn't exist and that is not even worse in real life right?

Reply

introskeptive says: April 8, 2014 at 1:45 pm

I'm not saying games shouldn't include mature themes – I think that when they do it's important that they're treated in just that way, with maturity.

Reply

Benners says: July 13, 2014 at 4:23 am

I found this entry recently and despite several re-readings am still baffled. When I played the game and listened to the tapes, I didn't see it as a rape-fetish reward for rescuing a POW in the mission; I saw it as expanding on the background of the story, revealing more about what happened to Paz and Chico, which I found to be enlightening of Paz's and Chico's behavior in Ground Zeroes and Chico's upcoming role.

On a broader scale, what DO you mean by treating a rape/torture scene with maturity? If it's about the tone, the tape accurately depicted the rape as horrifying. If it's about story relevance, the trauma inflicted on the victims were used by Skullface to manipulate them to his own ends. Or were you saying that there's supposed to be some meaning behind the rape itself, that the characters were supposed to be educated about their experience develop into stronger people or something? This latter concept I find to be ridiculous, since violence can and often results in only lasting pain, with very little meaning, so I'm hoping that this isn't what you meant.

Nic says: April 8, 2014 at 1:53 pm

It's mentioned in vague terms in Brad Shoemaker's review on Giant Bomb, so thankfully it's not being completely ignored by all publications.

I was similarly surprised that there was little mention of it elsewhere, though. Seems like a pretty messed up thing to not talk about.

Reply

Regina Rock says: April 8, 2014 at 2:19 pm

This is why I don't play Japanese games anymore. Japanese media and popular culture is almost-universally misogynist, sexually deviant, homophobic, racist, and horrifically obsessed with rape.

If you want to fight sexism in videogames start by demanding that the Japanese excise these terrible backward ideas from their media.

Reply

introskeptive says: April 8, 2014 at 2:21 pm

I think it's problematic to blame this all on 'Japanese culture' though, a lot of people seem to say that whilst knowing very little about that culture and finding it as simply an easy scapegoat. There are plenty of games without Japanese developers which have serious

issues regardless. Encouraging change doesn't come from saying your culture is wrong, we're boycotting what you create. Discussion is key imo.

Reply

Chriss | クリス (@Chriss_m) says: April 10, 2014 at 3:51 pm

I'm not sure how familiar the writer of the piece is with Japanese culture, but as much as I love Japan, this is just undeniable. Here's a particularly disturbing example:

"Nintendo and Square Enix changed revealing clothing in Bravely Default for Western release"

<http://venturebeat.com/2014/01/03/nintendo-and-square-enix-changed-revealing-clothing-in-bravely-default-for-western-release/>

The character in question was a 15 year old girl (her age was changed to 18 in the Western release). There's no rhyme or reason for the character being so dressed down, it's just pure sexualisation. The only reason I've ever seen for this sexualisation of young teenagers in Japanese media that even half rings true is that it is also aimed at young teenagers, thus not intended for paedophiles.

But the point is that you're right. Japan has massive issues with racism, sexism, outright misogyny, and homophobia. As much as I love Japan, I do hope the feminist movement picks up steam there. Both sexes from feminism. Women are treated more equally and men are able to break free from this antiquated ideal of masculinity.

Reply

V.Pupkin (@OneCrazyRussian) says: April 8, 2014 at 4:36 pm

This is what I'd call "an overreaction and overthinking"

Remember Peace Walker: Paz was already a victim of something (it was unsaid, I'm too early in the game), still she wanted to research "peace"

She's in her teens by then, of course she'd mature sometime

Now you are saying that she was depicted as more "tomboyish" (if that's an applicable word) so that the character could be made "evil" (because of course, feminine women can't be dangerous)

I'd say nothing of sorts: she matured on the battlefield for peace, and no one can grow "feminine" on the freaking battlefield

Then you move our attention to bomb scene

True, it is gory, but it is unrealistic AND cheesy as hell, it was made to be so "because it's MGS"

MGS is the series where main character heals up by eating rations, hides in a cardboard box and is encouraged to use non-lethal weapons on everything except giant shaghokhods, it IS UNREALISTIC AND CHEESY

And no place for some forced analogues as "destruction that her sexuality would otherwise bring", it is what it is: getting DA BOMBS out of a woman's abdomen

Now let's return to the rape scene

Err, I meant TAPE

The only depiction of it ingame is an audiolog. Well to clear something before I continue: no

other MGS game had such a form (MG; Rising is not MGS), any dialogue was either on CODEC or in a cutscene. MGS games were built on dialogues. This is the most minor form of storytelling in MGS to date

Now what if everything from that tape was brought to you by... Paz or Chico themselves? Would that do any good? Well it could be a great plot device for EMOTIONS, but not from a character's standpoint

So, anyway now we do know Skullface is one fucked up bastard, but the "recording" itself is very unclear. Half of the things could easily be mistook. That's the thing with MGS series: SPECULATIONS

Now then you are saying Paz takes the leading role and rapes Chico

Now really do you think Paz would do such a thing? She merely tries to ease it for Chico. Paz was imprisoned at the same age as him (as said in Peace Walker) and probably feels bad for him. But the only thing she can do now is to take the lead

And now I want to ask about your opinion on Skullface. You are saying that "he's evil for the sake of being so" but that's not true. Not a single villain to date has had such a property in MGS. We neither did get his backstory (OR DID WE? Time for MGS3 speculations) nor he is an image of a standart perv. MGS antagonists never were ludicrous OR over the top. Name one and I shall name his reasons to be "bad" and why did he/she went strange. Not crazy, just strange for others.

Sorry for my bad english

Reply

3nonetwo says: *April 8, 2014 at 4:48 pm*

Possibly one of the worst parts about this tape and its contents is that it *isn't* part of the main story. The tape is an unlockable collectable item, a reward for the player's time and effort. How on earth was the tape's contents considered to be anything resembling a reward?

Reply

sajon says: *April 8, 2014 at 6:12 pm*

This is obviously a totally legitimate criticism of both Hideo Kojima and the game. The only thing I take issue with is the assumption that his work is traditionally "not serious" somehow. He is historically one of the only AAA game makers who deals with war, censorship, imperialism, etc. in a serious and (arguably) left-leaning way. His games have dealt with difficult concepts for a long time, and the humorous aspects of his work – in most cases – was carefully constructed to not undercut or trivialize these issues.

None of this is an excuse for Paz's rape in Ground Zeroes, but I do believe the surprise some people are expressing over Kojima's attempts to include "serious" or "disturbing" content in MGS shows a real lack of familiarity with his work or his politics, or at the very least a rejection of the idea that seriousness and humor should be allowed to inhabit the same artwork.

Again, I am *not* objecting to the criticisms of Kojima in the above post, but rather some of the broader assumptions about the relationship between art, genre, and disturbing content they (to me) seem to imply. It reminds me a little bit of Spike Lee saying Django Unchained

trivialized slavery simply by virtue of the fact that it was a Spaghetti Western. He may not have been wrong about it trivializing slavery, but saying serious content and pop-genre should never mix is criticizing the art form when you really should be criticizing the artist.

Reply

Toodinho says: April 8, 2014 at 6:52 pm

Hi, this was an interesting read but I disagree very much with almost everything in it, just to be clear im a big Kojima and Metal Gear fan so if you wanna blame me disagreeing with this it's ok, also sorry if this turn ou to be a bit long.

So at the start of the article you said that Kojima stoires arent supposed to be taken seriously and that's a feeling shared by many people but for me Metal gear has had some of the most thoughtfull(even if many times not well told) stories in videogames to date and you may laugh at this and it's okay but for me Kojima's stories are always more then what the initially seem to be, now if Kojima games are good at telling stories is besides the point here what Im saying it's that for many of scenes and content in his games has a purpose to it.

Speaking of which let's get to Paz then, in Peace Walker she shows up as a pure child who only wants peace for her country and Snake only takes the job because of her she's there to remind Snake of a part of his he thought he lost after the events of MGS3 which he still feels extremelly guilty, by the end he is able to come to terms with what he has done and sees that he can still have that part of him that Paz represents, however in the end she betrays him he then has to fight her, she is then tortured, raped and literally blown up. As Snake path gets darker this side of him cant exist and it's completely destroyed by the events in the end of Peace Walker and Ground Zeroes, Paz is the literal representation of what's happening inside Snake. Now if you wanna argue that the character itself shouldnt exist soley for Snake's sake and that even then the scenes she's in are poorly handled it's ok but it's not without purpose. Another point you brought up it's that Metal Gear is cartoony and that's true and has been a mark of the series for ages it's less so in this game but it's present and it's one of the reasons many people cant take it seriously what so ever but that doesnt mean that cartoony cant touch on difficult topics you just need to see Watchmen for that, now the main problem is that Kojima and his team for all their thought put in the story on a macro level arent very good at writing dialogues that sound genuine most of the time and that wasnt so much of problem in other games that were more cartoony but it is here that I will agree.

That said I didnt think the rape tape was as you said Skullface is trying to demoralize Paz completely in front of Chico in order to make him talk, Chico had a very childish crush on Paz so Skullface is exploiting that as well as having Paz break by having a kid she cares about witnessing all of that he's trying to break both of them and as terrible as it sounds that's his "job" as a torturer, I dont wanna sound condescending so sorry if I am but I read alot of books and articles about dictatorships especially those of South America(where I live) and that's the MO of a torturer and many of the things done in real life dictatorships are much worse and grotesque to what happens in game, now im not saying that just because in real life it's worse that it's ok to have this kinda of torture in the game but that the type of torture there is akin to things that happen on real life. Also never I felt that Paz was being blamed for anything that it's what Skullface(and any torturer) wants her and Chico to think that it's their fault when it's not but despite all that Paz doesnt buy that and she clearly wants to kill him(see tape7 i think) Lastly I think it's highly unlikely that Skullface raped Paz he has soldiers with him and he's clearly not someone with a strong physical build he always has his soldiers beat her and what

not so I think it's fair to say he didn't do it himself despite orchestrating the whole thing, it's a minor point but I thought I should make it anyway.

If you made until here thanks for reading my response and I hope I was able to clearly made my point without coming off as a jerk.

Reply

Dave says: April 8, 2014 at 10:16 pm

Hey, was linked here by a friend. Thanks for writing this! I was also disappointed by the lack of discussion about Ground Zeroes's tapes on the biggest sites, and from the biggest personalities, but it wasn't completely absent. Take this article by Jeremy Parish:

<http://www.usgamer.net/articles/metal-gear-solid-ground-zeroes-and-the-trouble-with-tone>

I write for Anime News Network, which isn't on the level of your IGNs and Gamespots, but still caters to a very large audience. I addressed the issue of the tapes as best I could without being able to go into a lot of detail about them:

<http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/review/game/ps4-xbox-one-ps3-xbox-360/metal-gear-solid-v/ground-zeroes>

Of course, since that's an official review there's only so much you can do about spoilers. I wrote a tumblr on the subject later, trying to go into more detail about what skeeved me, specifically, on the whole thing:

<http://fastkarate.tumblr.com/post/81500301278/the-subjects-and-objects-of-abuse-kill-la-kill-and>

Thanks again for writing this; it's a good breakdown of what's going on in those scenes. I hope my handful of links don't come across as spammy, I only wanted to provide some resources to the few other discussions I'd seen on the web. Before my buddy linked this and the Telegraph piece, I'd really only seen US Gamer and Eurogamer bother to mention it as more than a sentence fragment, so I'm happy to see a really in-depth look.

Reply

Suriel says: April 9, 2014 at 3:13 am

As others have stated It's likely that the reason reviewers didn't even mention this in reviews is because they didn't find it (even with a game as "short" as this, reviewers have to focus on touring as much content as possible), and if they did find it, they probably didn't listen to it, since despite what sajon said, many don't consider optional content as relevant as main path objectives (this isn't meant to say that sajon is wrong — just that others don't see content the same way). So I don't think it's a case where people are hesitant to bag on Kojima. In fact, after the amount of media attention MGS4 got for its poor writing, I'd go as far as to say people come into MGS games looking for reasons to take him down a peg, but I digress.

And, for context, this isn't the first time Kojima has included something like this beyond what many would consider the critical path. Peace walker had a mission where you went on a date with Paz, and through the use of the game's communication gestures, eventually coerced her

into a cardboard box and had sex with her. Though Paz is at this time 24, iirc Snake believes her to be much younger than that (I sure did!) and still has sex with her. This, too, went largely unnoticed by games media.

In general I think Kojima's treatment of his female characters is haphazard at best, and disgusting at worst. And as a fan of the series who spent about ten hours with GZ because its systems are fun as hell, it doesn't give me too much hope for Quiet and I'm guessing MGSV will continue the trend of me having to roll my eyes at a ton of stuff in order to enjoy it. I disagree that the situation with skullface initially makes her out to be predatory towards Chico, but I understand why others would think so, especially since the idea that they would agree to have sex after being raped is ludicrous. Kojima would probably consider himself daring or ballsy for even talking about it, but it does come off as shock-jockey idiocy.

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Chriss | ク里斯 (@Chriss_m) says: April 10, 2014 at 3:34 pm

Hi! I left a comment on The Guardian, but I just wanted to include it here, too, if you don't mind! No offence intended, of course!

I had to come back to this article because it actually really disturbed me. There's this idea these days, almost like postmodernism has been taken to its subjectivist extremes, in which commentators seem to be able to impose their interpretation of art as objective fact. Case in point:

"The scene borders on the pornographic, the build up with close ups of the stitching being slowly removed, moving on to close ups of hands inside Paz's stomach, her blood and intestines glistening in the garish lights of the helicopter and of her face as she screams in agony."

This is clearly a very personal interpretation of the scene. Objectively, even the reasons given in the quote, present no argument for this scene being pornographic or anywhere near it. The scene has tension, focus on the operation, and a shot of the character's reaction. Pretty much like any scene of anything. The suggestion that it's pornography is an attempt to insist that Kojima put this scene in to titillate the player. I'm sure it would be considered psychopathological to find surgery sexually stimulating.

Another example:

"The entirely unbelievable end scene – where she's held down by Snake and Chico while a doctor reaches around inside her as one of them holds her intestines in – is an extremely ritualistic scene, bringing to mind sacrificial practices."

This interpretation is unsupported by the actual scene. There's an emergency surgery on a helicopter. That's about all that happens.

As an aside, which part of the game is believable? It's hyperrealistic – the game doesn't exist in our world.

Here's a very curious point of the article:

"This is furthered by the change in her appearance from Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker where she had an extremely feminine look, compared to her more masculine, short-haired appearance in Ground Zeroes, allying her with the male aggressor and making her seem more dangerous (because of course, feminine women can't be dangerous)."

Paz, in all her femininity, is a villain in Peace Walker! This is the problem with forcing a subjective analysis as objective fact. Sometimes the indisputable facts catch you out.

"The only way that Paz can redeem herself of her actions towards Chico and our realisation of her as a sexually manipulative woman and reach salvation, to become accepted by Snake and his team as "one of the good guys", is to become a martyr and literally destroy her genitals (and her entire body). She saves them from the destruction that her sexuality would otherwise bring and embraces her sacrifice as she dives out of the plane with crossed arms, facing Snake the whole time, able to be at peace with herself in the knowledge that she thinks she's saved them."

Paz has already redeemed herself. She doesn't relent to the torture she's endured. Which is why I find it utterly bizarre that the writer of this piece says Kojima is portraying her as a villain or submissive girl, whereas Chico is the ultimate innocent. It's a complete distortion of the game. Chico betrays Snake, he relents to the torture and lures him into a trap. Paz never relents – she endures all of the pain, but remains loyal until the end – even at the expense of her life (and yes, her genitals as well – why that gets emphasis is beyond me).

This paragraph is a bit disturbing to write, but the writer raises the question, so it seems necessary. Rape is an unspeakable evil. It is obviously an unthinkable trauma and the pain it causes is unimaginable. But how this is a more severe crime than murder or torture, I don't know. I don't understand why there should be special restrictions on the application of rape in a narrative, when murder and torture are apparently perfectly acceptable. They are all heinous. But they also all exist in real life. It is important art is allowed to reflect real life in any way it wants. Yes, even when it's done distastefully.

But I don't think that's the case here. The rape, torture, and murder of the character does serve to martyr her. It does serve to put her through pain – when the writer discusses this there's almost an implication that Kojima is taking pleasure in it, but I think it's clear he's attempting to show her strength to endure. Any character who goes through a trauma for the sake of his

or her comrades is going to win the audience's sympathies – and the perpetrator is going to seem more evil. It's basic storytelling. As I said earlier, I can't see rape as worse than torture or murder, so perhaps that's why I have no problem with it being used to show how grim the situation the character is in (how grim totalitarianism and war are).

Rape doesn't always need to have meaning behind its portrayal. There's often no meaning in rape for the victim. Sometimes people just fall victim to the evils of men. Art should reflect this, too.

Reply

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robin smith says: July 6, 2014 at 6:02 pm

My thought about the lack of coverage in regards to the tape in reviews is that it just may not have been listened to all the way through by many reviewers. While it doesn't say much for the state of reviews now, it's entirely possible that many reviewed the title without fully finishing it, or just didn't listen to the audio. Skipping (if possible) or just leaving the room at the time. As for the rating issue, that seems to me more like a problem with how ratings are created. With the rape/s being only through implied audio it's not possible to confirm exactly what is meant to be happening. The ratings system might just cover what's on screen visually and might not cover unseen events. Or they may just feel that without explicit visual evidence that they might not be able to correctly assert a different rating or descriptor to said ratings/warnings. It's like a horror film where you may hear screaming in the distance. Is that screaming a murder, torture, or something innocent.

I'm not saying that Kojima was right, or not tasteless in inserting this content in the game, especially as some kind of perceived reward for playing. The whole string of events, both narratively and creatively are questionable and tasteless, I just worry that no one will learn from this and make wiser creative decisions in the future. Especially Kojima.

Reply

Nathan says: August 1, 2014 at 5:33 am

Okay, all of these scenes are SUPPOSED to be intensely disturbing. Because to say that the series is completely silly and over the top and not serious or disturbing EVER is ridiculous.

How about how Solidus drug Raiden and countless other children into becoming child soldiers?

Or how Volgin beat people, most of the time to death, more than once, and it's heavily implied that he raped EVA more than once?

Oh, and you can't forget literally every backstory for every single one of the B&B Corps.

Still not enough?

Well, jumping back to MGS2 again, there's the fact that Otacon's stepmother seduced him and had an affair with him, (when he was a teenager, meaning MORE PEDOPHILIA) driving his father to suicide?

Seriously, if you people are going to freak out over every single little thing that doesn't project the same campy atmosphere as Metal Gear Rising, you're going to be sorely disappointed.

And you know what? If you heard this tape or saw that medic pull that bomb from Paz's gut and just said, "I hate Hideo Kojima, what a scumbag!", then you are playing Metal Gear Solid WRONG. I'm sorry to say, but you are. Metal Gear Solid is about letting go.

When you're playing this game, you shouldn't be thinking about Kojima or anyone else who made the game. You should be thinking, "I hate Skull Face! This man is a devil among men, capable of depravity farther than any human mind can conjure!" Because in the end, that is what these scenes were meant to do: showcase the lengths Skull Face will go to. Because he will do anything to reach his goals, and nobody will stand in his way. And THAT is why I love these scenes. They stir emotions deep within me. Ones that tell me that he needs to pay. Pay for the atrocities he committed. That's why this game is brilliant.

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