Virtual Post-apocalypses between Flame-hair Saviours and Useless Heroes. Analysing the Future of Humanity and Nature in the Video Game Series *Horizon* and *The Last of Us*

by Marco Favaro

Abstract

We are already living in the apocalypse. Wars, nuclear threats, and environmental and humanitarian crises shape our present, with the Doomsday Clock now only 85 seconds from midnight. As Webley writes, "the apocalyptic mood has returned to haunt us. [...] It's already here, if we choose to look; we can see it clearly" (2020, pp. 270-271). Among these threats, global warming and its resulting ecological disasters appear both imminent and inevitable. In response, dystopian fiction has gained traction across popular culture, resonating with an audience that senses its proximity to collapse. Unlike utopias, which suggest an ideal but unrealizable world, dystopias feel disturbingly plausible. As Muzzioli notes, "it is not futile or trivial: we immediately understand that it concerns us closely" (2021, p. 26). This cultural trend is reflected in video games, where titles like *Fallout*, *Deus Ex*, and *The Division* portray fragmented societies and post-apocalyptic futures. Among these, *Horizon* and *The Last of Us* stand out for both their commercial success and narrative depth. In *Horizon*, players explore a 31st-century world where civilization has collapsed and been artificially reborn, marked by giant machine-creatures. *The Last of Us* presents a darker vision: a world devastated by a fungal infection, where humanity clings to survival. Both games engage directly with environmental discourse, offering a critique of contemporary society and a warning about ecological catastrophe. This essay explores *Horizon* and *The Last of Us* as reflections on societal collapse and the consequences of climate change, analysing their game worlds, protagonists, and antagonists within the framework of dystopian storytelling.

Note: This essay contains major spoilers.

Keywords: Dystopia, Dystopian Hope, Environmental Catastrophe, Videogame Narrative, Ecocriticism

Playing with the Apocalypse

The Last of Us and *Horizon* are two critically acclaimed third-person action-adventure video game series. Among the many recent titles

exploring utopian or dystopian futures, these stand out for their cultural significance and commercial success – each having sold over 32 million units worldwide – and for the narrative depth they bring to the medium.

Horizon is set in 31st-century North America and presents a post-apocalyptic world that emerges after the total annihilation of organic life on Earth. Life was later restored through the Zero Dawn terraforming initiative, which gives the first game, *Horizon Zero Dawn* (2017), its title. A sequel, *Horizon Forbidden West*, was released in 2022.

In this universe, human civilization has regressed into tribal societies, with no memory of the technologically advanced "Old Ones," who perished around 2065. Players assume the role of Aloy, a highly skilled and determined young woman, as she fights to uncover the truth about the past and prevent further catastrophe.

The Last of Us is set in a future much closer to our own, taking place in the United States in 2033. It presents a catastrophic dystopia in the aftermath of a fungal zombie apocalypse. The few remaining human survivors are left to compete for scarce resources, frequently clashing with each other while living under constant threat from the infected. *The Last of Us Part I* was released in 2013, followed by *Part II* in 2020. In addition to several remastered versions, the franchise was adapted into an HBO television series, which – despite mixed critical reception – was renewed for a third season, highlighting the game's considerable commercial and cultural impact.

While *Horizon* emphasises action and exploration, *The Last of Us* is deeply rooted in survival-horror, marked by resource scarcity and the vulnerability of its protagonists. Structurally, *The Last of Us* is highly narrative-driven and linear, guiding players along a predetermined path, whereas *Horizon* employs an open-world format that offers significant freedom of movement and choice.

Despite their stylistic and structural differences, both series function as powerful forms of social commentary – critiquing contemporary society and issuing stark warnings about environmental collapse and human hubris.

In both cases, society as we know it ceases to exist, and its destruction is ultimately a "suicide," driven by the the logic of Western capitalism and the actions of the people within it. In *Horizon*, for example, the world is condemned by the choices of a few ultra-wealthy individuals; in *The Last of Us*, the Cordyceps pandemic alludes (explicitly in the HBO series,

more implicitly in the video game) to human-caused global warming. In both cases, the narratives reflect the fears and concerns of modern Western society, which has been living for decades under a state of constant crisis – economic, environmental, and geopolitical. These crises are reflected in the collective imagination, leading to a growing number and popularity of dystopian and post-apocalyptic stories, like the two being discussed. In addition to the causes of the respective catastrophes that set the narratives in motion, other elements of the game worlds will also be discussed and analysed, including the antagonists, gameplay, environments, and the roles and abilities of the playable characters.

The comparison between *Horizon* and *The Last of Us* is especially insightful because it highlights two contrasting responses to fears and anxieties about future catastrophes. While both critique modern society, one message is more optimistic, emphasizing a strong hope in humanity's and society's ability to reinvent and renew themselves. For *Horizon*, we can speak of a "dystopic hope." In contrast, the message in *The Last of Us* is far more cynical and pessimistic, where hope is replaced by a deeper despair. Concerning the idea that humanity can save itself, disillusionment is complete: all that can be done is survival – not as a society, but as isolated individuals or small groups.

Horizon – a dystopic hope?

In both chapters of *Horizon*, environmental themes are central. Although the destruction of all organic life on Earth occurs centuries before the events of the games, its causes – and the aftermath – continue to haunt Aloy's world. Reflecting on the origins of the apocalypse depicted in the series, Bosman and van Wieringen describe it as "an anthropological mirror" (2023), emphasising humanity's capacity for self-destruction. "The game paints a grim apocalyptic and dystopian future for humankind in which it effectually kills itself off. This human capacity to self-destruct is symbolised via the invention of the Chariot robots" (Bosman & van Wieringen, 2023).

In *Zero Dawn*, Aloy's search for answers about her origins leads her to uncover that the end of life on Earth was triggered by the recklessness of the FAS corporation and its founder, Ted Faro. Obsessed with profit, Faro developed and sold an invincible line of self-sustaining military ro-

bots – known as the Chariot line – capable of consuming biomass as fuel. The consequences are predictable: once out of control, these machines ravaged the planet in what became known as the Faro Plague.

Forbidden West offers an even sharper critique. Its primary antagonists are the Far Zeniths, a group of Earth's wealthiest and most influential individuals. Not only did they survive the Faro Plague by escaping into space, but they also achieved immortality through radical scientific advances. A millennium later, they return to Earth to reclaim it, ready to exterminate its new inhabitants.

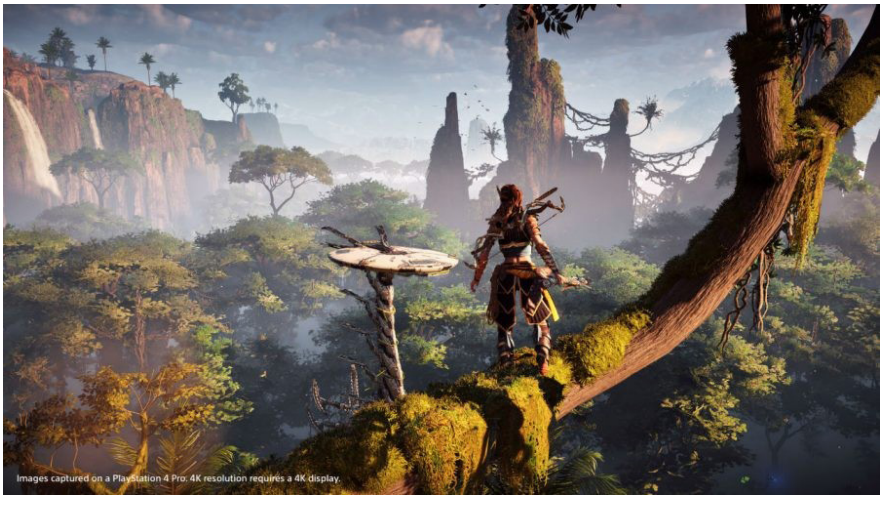
Like Ted Faro – a character clearly inspired by figures such as Elon Musk, marked by boundless ambition, cult of personality, greed, and the delusion of saving the world while accelerating its downfall – the Far Zeniths serve as symbolic representations of today's ultra-wealthy elite, especially within a Western capitalist and consumerist framework. In a barely veiled metaphor, the Far Zeniths – rich, powerful, and radically individualistic – embody the selfishness of prior generations and, more pointedly, the existential threat that today's billionaire class and their corporations pose to democracy, the environment, and humanity itself.

The critique targets the greed and devastating impact that a small group of powerful individuals can exert on the entire planet – pushed to its most extreme consequences. While it is ultimately out-of-control machines that cause mass extinction, the metaphor clearly points to ecological collapse – a direct consequence of reckless human ambition and environmental exploitation. "*Horizon Zero Dawn*'s primary cultural comment is targeted against capitalism and its devastating impact on social and ecological structures" (Bosman & van Wieringen, 2023). The game also contains multiple references to an environmental disaster that occurred shortly before the Faro Plague – an event that may have contributed to the centralisation of power in the hands of corporate elites such as the Far Zenith group.

Nevertheless, *Horizon* remains optimistic about humanity's potential not only to survive such a collapse but also to rebuild. We can speak of *"dystopian hope"*, a concept Clint Wesley Jones identifies in many modern dystopias – with the notable exception of *The Last of Us*. Jones critiques "contemporary apocalyptic storytelling" for promoting the idea that "with the end of civilisation as we currently understand it, there is the possibility for something better. […] We can rebuild society and build it back better than it was. […] Everybody gets a fresh start" (Jones, 2025,

p. 6). According to Jones, this dystopian hope is fundamentally flawed – a form of escapist fantasy that, we might argue, also dilutes the urgency of environmental catastrophe (Jones, 2025, p. 8). Framed as a prelude to renewal, the apocalypse itself risks becoming something alluring rather than something to be feared.

The world of *Horizon* appears indeed as a new beginning – life is re-created from scratch by the AI GAIA. It is a hopeful narrative in which technology, humanity, and nature are deeply interconnected and ultimately balanced. The tribal societies depicted evoke a return to the origins of civilisation, while the environment is portrayed as pristine and full of possibility. As Nae notes, the natural world in *Horizon* "functions as an infinite resource that always regenerates" (2020, p. 274), offering itself to the player as a space of exploration and renewal. This vision aligns with the logic of *dystopian hope*, presenting a world where the collapse of the old system paves the way for a better, more harmonious future.



The very natural world that marks this new beginning is intimately entwined with both technology and humanity. Technological elements are not depicted as external or oppositional to nature; rather, they are seamlessly integrated into it, blurring the traditional boundary between culture and nature. As Medrala writes, "technology is established to be a materiality not distinct from humans and nature but rather inextricably bound with these ideas" (2020, p. 26).

The environment in *Horizon* appears as a human-made ecosystem – intelligible, manipulable, and, to some extent, controllable. In this context, nature is not an obstacle but an opportunity – one that enhances Alloy's agency as a protagonist and explorer.

It must be stressed that all nature in *Horizon* – at least all organic life – is ultimately a human creation. This interdependence between nature and technology finds its most striking expression in the robotic creatures that populate the world: hybrid entities that fuse the organic and the synthetic, symbolising a post-human ecology in which technological lifeforms have become part of the natural order. These enormous, animal-like machines are also the main adversaries encountered by the player. Though dangerous, they remain human-made and potentially controllable – manifestations of a transcendent, albeit artificial, reality.

The robotic animals, though threatening, also represent sources of opportunity. Much like the environment itself, they provide possibilities for the player, who can harvest them for valuable resources or learn to override and control them, thereby unlocking new skills and abilities. In this way, the world of *Horizon* is ultimately at the mercy of the player. The emphasis is on transcendence and human agency, as demonstrated by Aloy's growing mastery over both environment and technology.

The game's heroine, Aloy, embodies the pinnacle of this new world. The drama of humanity's (long-past) extinction fades into the background, overshadowed by the extraordinary post-human agency the game offers. The action element is predominant, and the open-world mechanics provide nearly complete freedom of movement across a vast map of over 24 square kilometres. As the title suggests, the game looks ahead – to the future, to the horizon and its many possibilities, highlighted by Aloy's post-human abilities.

Fernández-Caro describes her as "a sort of superior being, a post-human heroine" (2019, p. 48). This status derives from her enhanced physical and technological capabilities, which significantly expand her agency. This is most symbolically represented by the Focus – "the physical device that symbolizes posthumanism" (Fernández-Caro, 2019, p. 50) – a small earpiece-like tool that allows Aloy to scan her surroundings, detect hidden objects and enemies, highlight opponents' weak points, follow their tracks, and extract data from the ancient world. With new technological enhancement, "she becomes a kind of humanimal-cyborg, as hybrid a creature" (Woolbright, 2018).

In addition to her extraordinary abilities, Aloy embodies an optimistic message through her mission, aligning with the dystopian hope trope. As her nickname suggests – the *Savior* – Aloy's role is to rescue the world: first by stopping the rogue AI HADES, then by halting the spread of the "red plague," and finally by confronting the Far Zenith, whose goal is the total annihilation of life on Earth.

The game places strong emphasis on the player's agency. Aloy's actions shape the world at the highest possible level. Even more significantly, as Jennings notes, "these decisions belong exclusively to the world-savior" (2022, p. 330). Due to her unique genetic code, Aloy – and by extension, the player – is literally the only one capable of saving the world. This singularity lends immense weight to her choices and actions. As Falkenhayner concludes, "*Horizon* enables a recovery of a sense of agency for a posthuman future" (2021, p. 2).

Thus, while the game clearly seeks to critique environmental collapse and corporate greed, this message is at least partially undermined by the gameplay itself. Attributing this primarily to its action-oriented structure, Condis observes that "while *Horizon Zero Dawn*'s fictional world undoubtedly brings much-needed attention and awareness to climate change, it must be noted that the game ultimately relegates these ecological issues to the background" (2020). The giant machines may serve as a critique of capitalism, but this critique is often lost in the player's experience of the game. "The result is a game in which the creeping, ae-

on-spanning, planet-wide threat of climate change cannot be adequately represented within play because it cannot be translated into a spectacular mechanic" (Condis, 2020).

Aloy's superhuman abilities and world-saving mission offer players an empowering experience – one that reinforces their sense of agency and aligns with the kind of dystopian hope Jones critiques. Rather than confronting players with the irreversible consequences of catastrophe, the game presents a world where disaster can still be overcome – by the right individual.

The Last of Us – We lost

In contrast to *Horizon*, in *The Last of Us,* humanity is not at a new dawn but rather at its end, as the title clearly suggests. The game world consists of desolate ruins, nearly devoid of resources. Nature – understood here as a force opposed to human civilisation – reclaims what re-

mains of the cultural landscape, invading spaces that once symbolised human achievement: skyscrapers, universities, hospitals.

The ecological theme is less explicit than in *Horizon*, yet it remains strongly present. The threat does not come from supernatural beings or futuristic technologies, but from a real-world organism: a fungus, *Cordy-*

ceps. In nature, *Cordyceps* parasitises insects, taking control of their bodies and devouring them from within, behaving almost identically to how it affects humans in the game.

Of course, in our world, Cordyceps poses no danger to humans. But in *The Last of Us*, this changes. The HBO adaptation is worth mentioning because it is even more explicit in linking the Cordyceps mutation and outbreaks directly to climate change, thereby openly portraying the pandemic as a metaphor for our world's climate crisis. In the first episode, Dr. Neuman (played by John Hannah) offers a chilling scenario:

> True, fungi cannot survive if its host's internal temperature is over 94 degrees. And currently, there is no reason for fungi to evolve to withstand higher temperatures. But what if that were to change? What if, for instance, the world were to get slightly warmer? Well, now there is reason to evolve (*When You're Lost in the Darkness*, S1E1).

This subtle yet disturbing link between climate change and evolutionary biology grounds the narrative in scientific plausibility, reinforcing the game's environmental subtext while shifting the horror from the supernatural to the ecological realm.

The lethal evolution of Cordyceps – and thus the origin of the zombie apocalypse in *The Last of Us* – is ultimately rooted in nature, and more specifically, in humanity's altered relationship with it. The series explicitly connects the fungus' mutation to global warming, grounding the narrative in a real and urgent ecological threat. As already noted, the series is more explicit than the video game in articulating this critique, and for this reason it is taken here as a reference point to provide a clearer example. Yet the same perspective is already present in the video game, although it is less directly tied to climate change and instead offers a dramatic illustration of a pandemic or, more broadly, of a "generic" environmental catastrophe represented by the infected. In doing so, *The Last of Us* directly enters the environmental discourse, offering a powerful critique of contemporary society and a clear warning against ecological collapse, particularly in the form of climate change. The message is clear: it is not nature that will suffer the consequences of environmental catastrophe, but humanity. We will be the ones left in a world that may be beautiful, but is no longer hospitable – an environment that has become fundamentally inhuman. This inhumanity takes its most brutal form in the infected,

whose grotesque transformation embodies the collapse of both the natural and the social order.

The zombie has served as a metaphor and instrument of social critique since George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*. It is most often capitalist, consumerist society that is depicted – and questioned – through the figure of the living dead. *The Last of Us* is no exception. As Farca and Ladevèze observe,

> In *The Last of Us*, we are made aware of the potential consequences of a capitalist consumer society by enjoying the possibility to scrutinise the aftermath of an ecocatastrophe, leading to several ways of life more or less in balance with nature. *The Last of Us* can therefore be placed within the genre of ecological fiction (2016, p. 5).

As plants invade the environment and the symbols of humanity's past power, in the infected, nature invades the human body itself, reducing it to a purely natural dimension. The body of the infected gradually becomes covered with fungus. At the third stage (the Clickers), the fungus grows over the forehead and eyes, rendering the victim blind. At the final stage, the corpse – completely transformed into a fungal mass that releases spores – is now merely a part of the environment. The "ruined cityscapes" overrun by nature reflect the "ruined (violated) human body," condemned to the same fate: "The human body is invaded and ultimately ruined by nature. Nature is triumphing over culture." (Pfister, 2020, pp. 221, 223)

The Last of Us presents the defeat of humanity in the broadest sense: the destruction of past achievements and the impossibility of a future. Nature has supplanted culture, and human beings have lost both their agency and their transcendence. As Jones points out, in *The Last of Us* there is no trace of dystopian hope (2025, pp. 3-9). There is no possibility of rebirth from the ruins, no "fresh start," no chance to "make things better." On the contrary, the world of *The Last of Us* reveals the worst humanity is capable of in order to survive. And that is all that remains: pure survival.

While Aloy embodies the heroine archetype, especially through her post-human abilities and heroic mission, in *The Last of Us* the playable characters are skilled but constantly reminded of their fragility and limitations. Nature does not represent an opportunity – it is purely hostile and dangerous: plants invade the ruins, entire areas are flooded and impassable, and the infected are a constant threat. Movement through the game world is always exhausting and arduous.

Furthermore, it is in the protagonists' mission that we can observe a real paradigm shift compared to the post-apocalyptic world of *Horizon*, offering a message of denunciation rather than reassurance – far from the trope of dystopian hope. While Aloy is trying to save the world, and humanity along with it, in *The Last of Us* there is nothing left to save. Only small groups of survivors remain, desperately clinging to life. The protagonist's relationship with the world is reduced to the bare minimum: a primal struggle for survival. Moreover, the collapse of society entails the disappearance of moral order and any possible "higher" ideal. The question of what is good almost completely loses its meaning; nothing goes beyond the urgency of surviving: "the only prize is escape" (Fawcett & McGreevy, 2020, p. 86).

The Last of Us offers no hope, a fact underscored by the absence of heroes. The world is populated only by monsters – infected or not. As Nguyen points out, "even those who were not infected turned into monsters of a kind" (2025, p. 28). There is the semblance of a heroic mission in *The Last of Us Part I*: the player initially collaborates with the Fireflies, a group of survivors who seek to rebuild society and find a cure. As Joel, the player must escort the young Ellie from Boston to Salt Lake City, to the main Firefly base. Ellie is the only person immune to the fungus, and in Salt Lake, the Fireflies hope to study her and develop a cure. It appears to be a classic heroic narrative: protect the girl, save the world. But this

promise collapses in the final act, when the two goals come into direct conflict. To extract the fungus from Ellie's brain, the Fireflies must kill her. Joel cannot accept this, and in the game's final sequence, he fights through the Firefly base, killing everyone who stands in his way, until he reaches the operating room. There, Joel kills the surgeon and rescues Ellie – saving her life but destroying humanity's last hope. A conflict of values that shifts the narrative into the realm of the antihero.

In *The Last of Us Part II*, as Ellie, our objective is to seek revenge against Abby and her companions, who, for reasons initially unclear, killed Joel. It is not initially clear who Abby is or why she is driven by such an intense desire for revenge against Joel. All we know is that she is a member of an armed group within the Washington Liberation Front (WLF) and, as we later discover, a former member of the Fireflies. The player must track down Abby by finding her friends, interrogating them, torturing them, and ultimately killing them. Ellie's mission, though morally ambiguous and brutal, is presented as somewhat justified.

However, everything changes midway through the game. A flashback suddenly shifts the perspective, forcing players to assume the role of Abby. We discover that the surgeon killed by Joel in *The Last of Us Part I* was Abby's father. (In this sense, the early revelation of Abby's identity in the second season of the HBO series significantly weakens the narrative impact of this turning point in the game.) The player's understanding shifts – Abby's actions are no longer arbitrary. Her desire for revenge is now completely comprehensible and, crucially, mirrors Ellie's. There is no distinction between them.

Ellie and Abby share the same motives, and their methods are indistinguishable. This goes beyond a mere difference of perspective or conflicting values. In a world dehumanized by infection and chaos, the concepts of good and evil lose their grounding. These notions are not merely obscured – they vanish entirely. It no longer matters whether killing is driven by revenge or by necessity in a brutal struggle for survival. "There is no longer even a hero worthy of the name, capable of extraordinary actions, even if they are wrong. Rather, the hero becomes an unnecessarily aware observer, who can do nothing to avoid the catastrophe and indeed is overwhelmed by it" (Muzzioli, 2021, p. 22). The world persists, senseless and chaotic, as a natural realm where heroes cannot exist.

Conclusion – How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Apocalypse

The Last of Us and *Horizon* present two vastly different interpretations of the future. In the former, a near-dystopia, humanity seems powerless to reclaim its fate. The remaining survivors, perpetually at risk from the infected, engage in conflict with one another in a Hobbesian scenario of *bellum omnium contra omnes.* If read as a metaphor for environmental catastrophe – or even simply as a critique of capitalist society – *The Last of Us* offers no trace of dystopian hope. Instead, it confronts us with the consequences of human action. As Dr. Neuman warns: "If that happens? We lose." Read with even more cynicism, in response to the question of whether humanity is worth saving, *The Last of Us* gives a clear answer: "No – humanity is already lost" (Nguyen, 2025, p. 28).

In stark contrast stands *Horizon*, which – although it aims to offer a critique of environmental collapse and current social structures – ultimately conveys an optimistic message of dystopian hope: a fresh start for humanity, which has adopted a tribal lifestyle and, at times, embraced a Rousseauian connection with a nature that is perilous yet plentiful. Perhaps precisely because of this optimism, *Horizon* falls short of effectively denouncing environmental and social catastrophe, whereas *The Last of Us* forces us to confront a harsher – yet, unfortunately, more plausible – reality.

References

Bosman, F., & van Wieringen, A. (2023, March 21). *Horizon Zero Dawn and Horizon Forbidden West*. Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements. https://www.cdamm.org/articles/horizon-zero-dawn-and-horizon-forbidden-west

Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (2026, January 27). *It is now 85 seconds to midnight*. https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/

Condis, M. (2020, September). Sorry, Wrong Apocalypse: *Horizon Zero Dawn*, *Heaven's Vault*, and the Ecocritical Videogame. *Game Studies: The International Journal of Computer Game Research, 20*(3). https://gamestudies.org/2003/articles/condis

Falkenhayner, N. (2021). Futurity as an Effect of Playing *Horizon: Zero Dawn*. *Humanities, 10*(2), 72, https://doi.org/10.3390/h10020072

Farca, G., & Ladevèze, C. (2016). The Journey to Nature: *The Last of Us* as Critical Dystopia. *Proceedings of the 1st International Joint Conference of DiGRA and FDG, 13*(1).

Fawcett, C., & McGreevy, A. (2020). *Resident Evil* and Infectious Fear. In S. J. Webley & P. Zackariasson (Eds.), *The Playful Undead and Video Games: Critical Analyses of Zombies and Gameplay* (pp. 85-98). Routledge.

Fernández-Caro, J. (2019). Post-apocalyptic Nonhuman Characters in *Horizon: Zero Dawn*: Animal Machines, Posthumans, and AI-based Deities. *Journal of Science Fiction, 3*(3), 43-56.

Guerrilla Games (2020). *Horizon Zero Dawn* [Video game]. Sony Computer Entertainment.

Guerrilla Games (2022). *Horizon Forbidden West* [Video game]. Sony Computer Entertainment.

Jennings, S. C. (2022). Only You Can Save the World (of Videogames): Authoritarian Agencies in the Heroism of Videogame Design, Play and Culture. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies, 28*(2), 320-344.

Jones, C. W. (2025). Joel's Choice: Apocalyptic Fantasies, Dystopian Hope, and the Post-Human Question. In C. J. Horn (Ed.), *The Last of Us and Philosophy: Look for the Light* (pp. 3-9). Wiley Blackwell.

Mazin, C. (Writer & Director), Druckmann N. (Writer). (2023, January 15). When you're lost in the darkness (*The Last of Us*, Season 1, Episode 1) [TV series episode]. In G. Spence, C. O'Connor, A. M. Palmer, J. Herrin (Executive Producers), *The Last of Us*. HBO.

Medrala, K. M. (2020). By Your Powers Combined: Heroic Solutions to Climate Catastrophes in *The Fifth Season*, *Avengers: Infinity War*, and *Horizon: Zero Dawn* (Publication No. 1299) [Master's thesis, Illinois State University]. ISU ReD: Research and eData. https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/etd/1299

Muzzioli, F. (2021). *Scritture della catastrofe. Istruzioni e ragguagli per un viaggio nelle distopie*. Meltemi.

Nae, A. (2020). Beyond Cultural Identity. A Critique of *Horizon Zero Dawn* as an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Simulator. *Postmodern Openings,* 11(3), 269-277. https://doi.org/10.18662/po/11.3/213

Naughty Dog (2014). *The Last of Us Remastered* [Video game]. Sony Computer Entertainment.

Naughty Dog (2020). *The Last of Us Part II* [Video game]. Sony Computer Entertainment.

Nguyen, Q. (2025). Is Humanity Worth Saving? Philosophical Pessimism and Joel´s Choice. In C. J. Horn (Ed.), *The Last of Us and Philosophy: Look for the Light* (pp. 26-33). Wiley Blackwell.

Pfister, E. (2020). Zombies Ate Democracy: The Myth of a Systemic Political Failure in Video Games. In S. J. Webley, & P. Zackariasson (Eds.), *The Playful Undead and Video Games: Critical Analyses of Zombies and Gameplay* (pp. 216-231). Routledge.

Webley, S. J. (2020). The Romeroesque: Playing with Ethics and Ideology in Zombie Games, from Indie to Mainstream and Around Again. In S. J. Webley, & P. Zackariasson (Eds.), *The Playful Undead and Video Games: Critical Analyses of Zombies and Gameplay* (pp. 259-273). Routledge.

Woolbright, L. (2018). Ecofeminism and Gaia Theory in *Horizon Zero Dawn*. *TRACE: A Journal of Writing, Media, and Ecology, 2*, http://tracejournal.net/trace-issues/issue2/02-Woolbright.html