

Game Narrative Review

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Your name (one name, please): Namnam Goodarzi
Your school: Sheridan College
Your email: goodarzi@sheridancollege.ca
Month/Year you submitted this review: December 2018

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Game Title: Devil May Cry 3: Dante's Awakening
Platform: PlayStation 4, PlayStation 2, PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Xbox One, Microsoft Windows
Genre: Action-Adventure, Hack and Slash, Third Person Shooter
Release Date: February 17, 2005
Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Capcom
Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer: Bingo Morihashi, Takayasu Yanagihara, Hideaki Itsuno.

Overview

The phone rings. "Sorry, not open for business yet", says Dante as he throws the phone perfectly back into place. Thinking he'll have the day to himself with his box of pizza, Dante finds himself greatly mistaken. A tall, scarred bald man walks inside and asks, "Is your name Dante... Son of Sparda?"

"Where did you hear that?"

"From your Brother...He sent this invitation for you. Please...accept it"

Vergil, the twin brother of Dante, wishes to open the demon world, which was sealed by their father, for a reason. The only one who's any match for him, is Dante himself.

"Invitation huh?", says Dante. So, the young hybrid makes it his quest to stop Vergil from releasing the demons onto the human world and gaining their father's power.

Devil May Cry is a series that has span for almost 20 years, and has managed to excite fans with each release, especially for the upcoming installment, DMC5. *Devil May Cry* has players explore the human world and the devil world, using a high difficulty curve to challenge players and have them perfect various techniques (as seen in style points), using guns and melee weapons, and Dante's devil trigger. Though the gameplay is very strong, DMC3 truly shines with its narrative. It elevates its narrative by assigning each major character a specific theme/ideology, such as being from two different worlds, family, and responsibility. This is what made this entry to the series distinct from the

ones before it, employing these themes into its characters, made their relationships with each other feel more authentic.

Characters

Main Cast:

- **Dante-** The main character of *Devil May Cry 3*. A man who sees himself as suave, who is in fact the opposite. Loud, confident, and brash are characteristics that make up the outer layer of Dante's character. This outer layer of Dante's character is reflected in his outer wear, his clothing. He is shirtless, but wears a long red trench coat, along with a pair of pants. Shirtless characters are associated with being free, confident and having a high self-esteem, as this is seen many times in his extravagant way of killing his enemies, as well as his taunting nature. Red is a color that is meant to be eye-catching due to its vibrancy, it's also associated with passion and aggression. His passion is seen in his flirtatious nature with other female characters, and his aggression is seen in his devil side and fighting capabilities. He is driven by the human side of his DNA, which is to protect the human world from the demons along with anyone that means to disturb that drive, including his brother Vergil.
- **Vergil-** The identical twin brother of Dante, as well as one of the main antagonists. Vergil is an honorable, ambitious, and a power-driven individual who wishes to gain the power of his demon father, Sparda, in order to counterbalance his human side, which he sees as a weakness. Further aspects of his personality are reinforced in his character design. As he is the twin of Dante, his clothing style is quite similar. He dons a trench coat in blue, which has a color association with being cold, reserved, and precise. He also covers up his whole body with black shirt and pants, which is in contrast to Dante's shirtless wear. This shows that Vergil holds himself in a high, respectable manner, as being fully clothed is often a sign of modesty and respect of one's self and body. Vergil is driven by the devil side of his DNA, and wishes to separate himself from his human half, by becoming a full demon, so that he can protect anything he wants. Which was something he wish he had, in order to save his mother from the demons.
- **Lady-** A duty to fulfill, responsibility is what drives her soul. Feisty, and hot to handle is the daughter of Arkham, a young woman who holds a strong hatred for demons, as they were the ruin of her childhood, as well as the downfall of her father. She makes it her quest to stop her father from gaining Sparda's powers. As she views this issue as a family problem, she sees it as her responsibility to end him, as she is the byproduct of her father, Arkham. At the end of the game, she lets Dante fight her father in her place, as this is seen when she gives him her large

rocket launcher (Kalina Ann), as a sign of peace between her resolve and with Dante.

- **Arkham**-A man of many faces, a scholar, a manipulator, and a father. Arkham is the main antagonist of the game, a human who wishes to gain the powers of Sparda (demon father of Dante and Vergil), in order to become stronger than the rest of humanity and become the ruler of a new era. He gained part of his demon power through murdering his own wife and wishes to complete his transformation by drawing the blood of his daughter, thus attaining Sparda's powers. He is depicted to have a scarred face, as this is meant to represent his "incomplete" transformation of becoming a demon.

Important Supporting Characters:

- **Sparda**-The demon who married a human and became the father of the demon-human hybrids, Dante and Vergil. He is constantly referenced in this game, as he is the catalyst for most of the main character's motivation. He is viewed as the most powerful being to have ever existed, which makes him become a desirable goal for the power-hungry antagonists.

Breakdown

While the series *Devil May Cry* has been known for its insanely skilled hack and slash, and shooter mechanics, the quality of its narrative had been known amongst fans and critics to be very lacking in each entry of the series, that is, until the prequel *Devil May Cry 3* was released. *Devil May Cry 3* is the prequel, the beginning of everything that makes up the DMC franchise. It uses all the positive characteristics of Dante, as seen in the first two DMCs, and molds them together, to create a fresh, younger version of Dante, who holds depth that is often over looked by many.

The 3-act plot structure was the stepping stone of DMC3's success, but the way it told its tale, by manipulating this structure and applying ideologies/themes and character types, is what made it a resonating story for everyone.

Act One: The Setup:

"Well...I met the sons of Sparda... Both of them. Although the same blood of their father flowed through their veins, the two battled each other fiercely like arch-enemies. It seemed as if they derived some sort of twisted pleasure from this brotherly fighting. But in the end... only one was left standing."

- Lady.

During the prologue, the player is welcomed with an opening cutscene, illustrating the fight between two brothers with snow white hair, one dressed in crimson red, the other dressed in royal blue. This cutscene foreshadows their first fight, and their last. This is the establishing point of both Dante and Vergil. It demonstrates their clashing ideals, their poor relationship with one another, and provides insight into their character.

"Leave me. I won't tell you a third time."

-Vergil

The exposition of Vergil's character can be seen when you finish the game and choose to play it again as Vergil instead of Dante. In this scene, Vergil is in a library, reading a book about the legend of Sparda. Arkham is introduced here, he comes and disrupts Vergil's reading by provoking him with the details inside the book, and questioning Vergil what is he truly looking for. Arkham ends the scene with asking Vergil to share with him the story of Sparda. This shows the player the first encounter between the two, and how they teamed up together, as they both share the same goal. Vergil is shown to like solitude, as he is seen by himself initially, and is also quick to anger when disrespecting what's dear to him, which in this case, was the story of his father.

"Sorry, not open for business yet."

-Dante.

The exposition of Dante's character is further explored in Dante's first scene. The phone rings, and Dante is just coming out of the shower. He kicks up the chair that was on the ground, as well as kicking the table so the phone flies into the air, he catches it at the same time he sits down with his legs outstretched before him. This shows the audience that this character is a laid-back, carefree soul, who so happens to run some kind of business, which in this case, is devil hunting. In less than 30 seconds, the player already understands who Dante is, at least on the outside.

"From your Brother... He sent this invitation for you. Please... accept it."

-Arkham.

What DMC3 does differently than most games using the three-act plot structure, is that they established most of Act One in the first 30-45 minutes of gameplay. The main focus is character relationships, so cutting down time for the exposition makes sense, as DMC3 wishes to create conflict by using the relationships of the characters, such as Man vs Person and Man vs Self, rather than having a Man vs. Nature conflict.

"No doubt you've got some fun planned for me. Right, Vergil?!"

-Dante.

Vergil is at the very top of the tower, while Dante is situated at the bottom of it. This demonstrates the power gap between the two, and also illustrates to the player, the end goal: Defeat Vergil. Moving forward inside the tower becomes the catalyst of the game, as it is what jump starts the next plot points.

Second Act: Confrontation

The rising action takes place through each Boss Dante has to beat, as their defeat will reward Dante with new weapons. This is building the player's arsenal and adds more ways to fight enemies. Leading up to each Boss, is a puzzle for the player to solve, as well as a swarm of enemies to fight. All of this acts as preparation for the first fight with Vergil.

"Why do you refuse to gain power? The power of our father, Sparda."

-Vergil.

"Father? I don't have a father."

-Dante.

After a hard-fought battle with Vergil, Dante loses as he still rejects part of himself-his devil side. Thus, this marks the game's midpoint. As Dante is the twin that focuses on his human side (while Vergil does the opposite), Dante is considered to be incomplete. Though he has gained many weapons and has learned multiple techniques (as well as having the player develop their skills along with Dante, through practice), Dante doesn't use all of his powers to his disposal, and this is what leads to his downfall, his loss to Vergil.

"Foolishness, Dante, foolishness. Might controls everything, and without strength, you cannot protect anything. Let alone yourself."

-Vergil

"eerrrAAAARRRRGGGGHHH!"

-Dante

"I see a devil inside you has awakened as well."

-Vergil

Dante unleashes his devil side in sheer desperation in order to gain back his half of the amulet, after Vergil takes it from him. To have Dante unleash his devil side all of a sudden is a great shock to the player, as this side of him had never been shown before. This also tells the player that Dante truly loves his mother a lot, as this was her last gift to him. To see him get very upset over it being taken, shows us that even though he has awakened the devil inside him, his feelings are genuine, and are human.

Third Act: Resolution

"You have lost...Because you've underestimated humans."

-Arkham

The pre-climax of the narrative is their fight that ended in a stalemate, as it makes players want more, since they haven't gotten over their loss to Vergil, and neither has Dante. As Vergil tries to use Dante's half of the amulet to open the gate to the demon world, Dante catches up to him and proceeds to stop his twin. Dante and Vergil fight once more, but find that their battle ends in a stalemate, as they have been interrupted by Lady, and then the Jester, who turns out to be Arkham.

"I'll try it your way for once." -Vergil

"Remember what we used to say?" -Dante

"DON'T DO IT!" -Arkham

"JACKPOT!" -Vergil and Dante

After fighting off Arkham together, Dante and Vergil still find themselves at odds with one another, their ideals and morals clash. Though they shared a brotherly moment by working together to defeat the main antagonist, it only lasts for a short while. Vergil is still hellbent on obtaining his father's power, and Dante is still persistent in stopping his brother. They fight once again, one last time. As in common literature, the number 3 is the magic number, this number is especially lucky for Dante in this fight. Dante grows from being a person who rejects his devil side, and now embraces it to be a part of himself, meaning that he is whole. And as a person who now completely accepts himself, he uses the advantage of having the best of both worlds. Dante comes out superior in the fight. This is the climax of *Devil May Cry 3*, Dante has beaten his brother after numerous attempts, and has grown as a character because of it.

"No one can have this, Dante... it's mine, it belongs to a son of Sparda. Leave me and go, if you don't want to be trapped into the demon world... I'm staying. This place was our father's home."

-Vergil.

The denouement of the story falls when Vergil falls. As Vergil descends into the demon realm to live a life like his father, it begs the question, did Vergil end up growing as a character? Vergil's growth is not to the extent of Dante's, he stays rather stagnant actually, due to him not accepting his human side and choosing to live in the demon realm. But Vergil has shown signs of humanity. He constantly tries to differentiate himself from Dante, as it can be seen in his clothes, mannerism, and hairstyle. But there have been multiple occasions where Vergil has shown to be kind in his own way, as well as being able to show mercy. When Lady is resting inside the tower after giving Dante her rocket launcher, Vergil just pays her no mind and walks to the door going upstairs. She had attacked him on multiple occasions and has even tried to kill him, but Vergil doesn't take revenge, even though it would be really easy for him to do, he chooses not to. This can also be seen in his end goal: wanting the powers of Sparda. Now, he doesn't wish to rule over humanity with these powers, rather he wishes to find a way to protect himself from losing someone he loves (which was his mother, and this is what causes him to have this endless drive for power). Vergil also tells his brother to leave the demon

realm and to not follow him, initially, this was seen as a way for Vergil to show his brother that he is not willing to change, but it is in fact the only way that Vergil knows how to save his brother. Even though their relationship is rocky, there is still familial love. Vergil knows that his end goal is still out there somewhere in the demon realm, he could have dragged Dante into the demon realm with him and just take Dante's amulet again, but instead, he chooses to push his brother away, in an attempt to make sure he doesn't get trapped in here along with him, as there is no return to the human world. Vergil also slashes Dante's hand as he falls into the abyss, this is initially seen as a way for Vergil to threaten Dante to not follow him (as in attacking him), but it could actually be looked as a "mark" if you will. A mark from Vergil on Dante's palm, though this acts as a way of "cutting ties", as its very unlikely the two will meet again, it's always a way for Dante to remember his brother, which was usually through their cuts and bruises from battling each other.

"Are you crying?" - Lady

"It's only the rain." - Dante

"But the rain already stopped." - Lady

"Devils never cry." - Dante

"I see. Maybe somewhere out there even a devil may cry when he loses a loved one. Don't you think?" - Lady

"Maybe." - Dante

Dante tears up at the loss of his brother, but denies it, as "devils don't cry". But it's very much fact to the player and to Lady that he does love his brother and wishes things didn't end this way. After the credits roll, the game pulls up a cutscene of present-day Dante, and what he's up to now, and it is revealed to the audience that the name of his business is, "Devil May Cry". But the significance behind it is from that last moments with Vergil, the last fight, and the last goodbye from the two brothers, the name of Dante's business is in remembrance of that. Remembrance of Vergil.

Strongest Element

Dante and Vergil are foil characters to one another. They serve as the juxtaposition in the game. Juxtaposition is a very powerful tool to use in order to show the difference between two parties. And this is done extremely well with the twins, as Dante and Vergil are identical twins, it makes sense to see the similarities between the two, in a matter of appearance. But it in fact, runs deeper. When we put the two side by side, we can see that there is an immediate difference in character design. Dante has shaggy hair and wears a passionate red trench coat with no shirt, and a pair of pants, while Vergil has slicked back hair and wears a long deep blue trench coat, black shirt and pants. This is both to convey their character traits, such as red showing Dante's aggressive, flirtatious, and loud side, while blue for Vergil, shows his restraint, precise, and cold demeanor. The both are foil characters to one another. The writers did this, in order to highlight specific traits in each twin. Having these two constantly interact with

each other, reinforces their personality traits twice as more to the player, as their difference is what makes their character traits pop out more.

Unsuccessful Element

Technique, practice and skills are the key to winning in this game. It requires a lot of perseverance to continuously fight the same boss over and over again, in order to memorize their pattern, and apply what the player has learned from each failure, into their next encounter. DMC3 rewards the player for proficiency in technique and timing, as this is seen in the style points acquired during combos and at the end of the level screen, displaying the player's high score, and providing a bonus depending on the achieved rank (such as "D" = lowest, "SSS" = highest in regard to Stylish ranks). Though this entices and encourages the player to execute techniques with competence, it does turn away many others that don't have the drive to do the same and prevents them from finishing the game. This can be seen in the green orbs that can be bought in the game, they basically act as a way to upgrade your health bar. But, unlike most games, DMC3 makes each item more expensive after each purchase, which further pushes the player to spend more time honing their skill, rather than having a large health pool to compensate. It should also be noted that the game has been said to be extremely difficult in "normal mode", and that easy mode is to be unlocked a little later, which hopefully, no players drop the game before they can reach that difficulty change. What can be done instead, is to allow the easy mode difficulty option at the very beginning of the game, cut the price increase by half (as this will allow newer players to be able to get used to the skill aspect of gameplay, rather than scaring them off immediately from a steep price increase), or offer a different reward for achieving high stylish points, such as a new weapon/ability unlock.

Highlight

When Dante and Vergil join together to take down Arkham, it is the best moment in the game. Two brothers, the ultimate rivals, who have been facing off one another since the beginning of the game, finally join together to take down a common enemy. It should also be noted that they constantly make references to things that they did together as kids, or at least before their relationship turned sour. Seeing them work together, shows the character growth between the two, and it gives the player insight on what their relationship was like before it turned bad. It seemed that Dante and Vergil had a healthy, loving brotherly bond, but due to their ideals, they went their own separate paths. This scene is particularly powerful, as it demonstrates the power of this familial bond, and how it can overcome anything when two brothers work together, instead of against each other. It also makes the player think of what kind of story these two would have had, if they had stayed on good terms.

Critical Reception

IGN-Jeremy Dunham- 9.6/10: Dunham says that *Devil May Cry 3*'s greatest strength is its cinematic feel. As it tries its best to use action movies as a source of inspiration, the cutscenes feel like they are embedded into the gameplay and transition seamlessly from one plot point to the next. The cutscenes act as a Segway into gameplay. Another strength Dunham mentions is that the diverse move set of enemies, allows players to be always on their toes, and encourages reflexes and skills, rather than button mashing.

Gamespot- Greg Kasavin- 8.6/10: Kasavin states that *Devil May Cry 3* is a wonderful game with a strong combat system, story arc and characters. Though the game's difficulty is spiked too high for the average gamer, it comes with its reward, at least to those who make it. There's a disconnect between Dante and the player, as the player doesn't understand how to use Dante's abilities and styles to their advantage, thus making the beginning of the game harder. It doesn't help that Dante can do all these crazy kills in cutscene, but they player can't in their gameplay. But once the player practices and becomes better to the point that they can accomplish the crazy stunts that Dante does in the cutscenes, they become even closer with Dante, and understand him as a person.

Lessons

Lessons for Narrative/Game Designers:

- **The Importance of Good Character Design**

The character designs of both Vergil and Dante are used to reinforce their personality traits subconsciously to the player. The appearance of Dante's long hair and leather jacket tells the audience that he is saucy, cocky and has an interest in rock and roll. Vergil's appearance is clean and cut, much like his personality and fighting style. This is something that is also represented in real life, we call it "first impressions". How a person takes care of themselves and dresses, tells us a lot about their story and personality. Designers should always seek to design their characters with thought and heart. A character tells their story through dialogue, their interactions with their environment and other people, but how they carry themselves tell us more, much more than words could ever say.
- **The Medium of Games Can Be Used to Send a Message**

Messages have been embedded in all forms of medium. Games are no different. The message of accepting all sides of oneself, even though they conflict with one another, is seen in the character Dante. His character grows as he learns to accept his demon side, and this is seen when he uses his powers for the betterment of everyone else (unlike his brother Vergil). Even though demons are associated with mass homicide and destruction, he spins these preconceptions on its head, and shows the player that there is good in everything. As there is an interactive component in games, which sets it apart from all other types of media, Game/Narrative designers can use this to their advantage. They could even take it to the next step, and force players to do certain actions in order to progress the

story, and if these decisions were conflicting to make, it will only affect the player more.

- **Narrative and Gameplay Go Hand in Hand**

*While Devil May Cry 1 and 2 had flawless gameplay mechanics, the story is what left it in the shadow. This can also be said for any purely driven story-based game, with poor or limited mechanics. We need games that both have characters and stories that make players care, but we also need game mechanics that are both fair and fun for the player. Games are an interactive medium, they are not passive like movies or literature. So, game designers and narrative designers should actively use this to their advantage. *Devil May Cry 3* succeeded by keeping what worked with their game mechanics, reworked their characters from the ground up, and made the story revolve around the characters instead of keeping both narrative and characters separate. Engaging all senses of the player will make the player believe in the story, characters, simulate them into the experience, and make the game become the player's new reality.*

- **Originality Doesn't Exist**

Devil May Cry 3 references religion, as it can be seen in the character's names of Dante (a poet who wrote the Divine Comedy, which talks about the realms of hell which are Purgatory, Hell, and Paradise. DMC3 references the Divine Comedy through the twins), Vergil (references the Roman poet, famous for delving into the topics of magic and divination, he was also seen on the same level as Hebrew prophets who ushered in Christianity), Lady (her real name is Mary, which is an obvious reference to Virgin Mary). In addition to the previously mentioned religious inspirations, the game also takes inspiration from the Cain and Abel trope in regard to Dante and Vergil. The Cain and Abel story has been told since the beginning of time and has been used in various forms of medium and even persists to this day. Though this story has been told so many times, it should be noted that using preexisting tropes and stories, is not a bad thing. Many designers would look at it as being "uncreative" or "unoriginal", but it should be noted that there are no original ideas anymore. Everything has been done and redone over and over again, what we see as an audience, is just different iterations of the same thing. Designers should learn to embrace this fact and look for ways to creatively work with these design constraints, as its beneficial to use a trope that people immediately recognize (audience already understands the character or setting), and with this trope, adapt it to something new, and make it fresh again.

Lessons for the Player:

- **Family**

Family is important and if someone from the family messes up, it looks bad on everyone. This can be seen as both a good and bad thing. While it had a negative impact on Lady and Dante, as both of their father's caused great chaos to the world, resulting in the both of them (the children), to fix both of their father's mistakes, it is very much seen in real life as well. Many instances of negative controversial people have led their family to be unwilling put in the spot light and crossfire, even though they do not deserve it. Family is a beautiful thing, to the point where it is considered the strongest bond ever to be hold between a group of people. And because of this blood relation, it makes people do crazy things. Like when Lady wanted to face her father alone, even though she is no match for him. Or when Dante and Vergil let the power of the amulet get in the way of their brotherly love, to the point where they fight to the death for this mere object. Family can bring people together, or tear there a part.

- **The Best of Both Worlds-Identity**

Being a part of two different races, especially when those races have a long running conflict with one another. It is often forced upon the children to make a choice. This is seen with the characters of Dante and Vergil. At the beginning of the game, Dante identifies more as a human, and never uses his devil side (until after the first fight with Vergil), in order to disconnect his association with his other half. This is also further emphasized as Dante runs a business to hunt devils. On the other hand, Vergil identifies as a devil, and represses his emotions and constantly seeks to complete himself by gaining the power of Sparda, in order to become a full devil. What Dante learned at the end of the game, is that accepting both of his sides is what makes him complete. He can have the compassion of a human and the powers of a devil, and that doesn't make him a bad person. Being able to understand both sides is what helps a person grow, as their mindset is diverse. The repercussions can be seen in Vergil's character, him constantly chasing his dream of becoming a full devil is what lead to his downfall.

- **Responsibility**

Lady is the character that embodies the idea of responsibility. She takes it upon herself to fix her father's mistakes, since she feels like she is responsible due to the fact that she is related to him. Having a sense of responsibility only comes to those who truly grow up, though Lady takes it in a different sense. At the beginning, she confused her sense of responsibility as a way for vengeance against the death of her mother. After being convinced otherwise by Dante, she sets things right by giving her duty over to him (her rocket launcher), as he is the most capable person to truly defeat her father. Lady learns that with great power comes great responsibility, and that we should always do our diligence to do what we can for the betterment of everyone else. In this case, it was to give up her weapon and hand over the task to Dante, as that was the surest way the problem would have gotten taken care of. When her father is finally before her, she pulls the trigger and ends him, not letting his manipulating words get to her. Though it is hard (as she is seen crying in the end), she knows that this is in the best interest of everyone.

Summation

After multiple entries to the story of Dante, the *Devil May Cry* franchise had finally gotten the formula correct with DMC3. Combining stellar gameplay and a refreshing take on the character's themselves, as well as the DMC lore. DMC3 not only follows the 3-plot act structure but uses it to their advantage to develop their characters with various ideologies/themes, to create conflict and intricate character relationships. This is what fans and critics wanted in the series, as can be seen when they highly praised the realism found in these iconic characters. Capcom embedded the three-act plot structure and ideologies/themes to create a game that took fans and the media by surprise. A series that had amazing gameplay, but was looked at as a joke, due to its nonsensical characters and its weak, convoluted story, still kept all of what made DMC special, and showed us all that it was a diamond in the rough that was worth shining.

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