



Halo: Silentium

Greg Bear

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In the last years of the Forerunner empire, chaos rules. The Flood—a horrifying shape-changing parasite—has arrived in force, aided by unexpected allies. Internal strife within the ecumene has desperately weakened Forerunner defenses. Only the Ur-Didact and the Librarian—a husband and wife pushed into desperate conflict—hold the keys to salvation. Facing the consequences of a mythic tragedy, one of them must now commit the greatest atrocity of all time—to prevent an unmatched evil from dominating the entire universe.

This is the third and final volume of The Forerunner Saga.

Halo: Silentium Details

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From Reader Review Halo: Silentium for online ebook

Mike Veitch says

For any true Halo fan this book is the one against which the rest will be judged.

This storyline further builds on the solid foundation of Forerunners history put in place by Greg Bear. The storyline continues on from the second book in the trilogy, however this one is fast paced and keeps your attention from start to finish. It is brimming with political intrigue and conflict on a universe scale.

Sean says

Greg Bear has brought a new level of awesome to the Halo novel franchise. The three books chronicling the Forerunner struggle against ancient humans and the Flood are separate from the main Halo series but live within a context that adds an ominous tone to these tales that is indispensable. Bear is able to bring together strong, alien characters with an epic intergalactic struggle for the fate of life as we know it reminiscent of Asimov's works.

For the Halo fan, this novel specifically adds a new dimension to the Flood's history that is pretty startling. One piece of the Forerunner history that always sat poorly with me was that the Forerunners could have been so easily overrun by these rotting creatures; that they would actually have to resort to the Halo weapons seemed like a stretch. But you will find that there is a lot more to the Flood than I previously thought, and once upon a time they had much more powerful resources at their disposal which did not survive the firing of the Halo array.

Travis O. says

When all is said and done, what will be remembered of the United States? Will it be our national monuments, leaving our descendants wondering why we might have built such a thing? Will it be our enduring legal codes, as an example for how to run--and preserve--republics and democracies? Or will it be the trillions of hours of multi-media recordings we have saved in every nook and cranny? Lonely monuments litter the Halo games, as both set pieces and entire self-contained sets, but they tell us little of those aloof ancestors. Rather, it is the enduring final moments, presented first in elusive, enigmatic terminals scattered throughout the games that tell us who the builders truly were. Greg Bear's final book in the Forerunner trilogy, Halo: Silentium, takes those loose strings and weaves a strange, imperfect, and beautiful web from them. The question that should be on every Halo fan's mind is, how does the world end? With a bang, or with a whisper?

Halo: Cryptum (review) and Halo: Primordium (review) have distinctly different tones and identities from one another, while sharing the common themes of duty and responsibility; Silentium is no different. It presents a totally different narrative structure to its precursors, while retaining much of the same cast. Present are both Didacts, the original and Bornstellar, as well as the Librarian, Chakas, the Master Builder, and the bad guys. Primordium left off at a very bad spot in the war between Forerunner and Flood, with the scorpion-headed beast in control of one of the Halo rings and the Forerunner civilization rapidly crumbling. Bear avoids jumping straight into the action by construction a curious narrative structure that will stand out more than any of the true content of the novel.

It begins with the questioning by a Senior Juridical (judge) trying to access information in the “Mantle,” the Forerunner’s telepathic internet. The unavailability of information--and the strange inhabitant intelligence that communicates with the Juridical--alerts us to the severity of the situation. The juridical’s perspective is an odd one to choose, since it is unfamiliar and necessitates more of the jargon-slinging that dragged the first book down like a lead balloon. However, since Bear is writing about a civilization in its death throes, it makes a lot of sense to get a legal perspective--and we get a lot of that throughout the book. In bad times, a society defines itself by the actions it does and does not take; these are all-too-often definitions of legal and illegal, and, knowing the pending annihilation of the Forerunner, it’s all the more poignant to see their supreme legal figures failing to act.

A second character quickly introduced is Catalog. Catalog was easily the most interesting character I encountered, perhaps because of its unfamiliarity, but also because it felt like a genuinely “sci-fi” idea established by bear. In brief, Catalog is a collective union of individuals who suppress their personalities in favor of objective observation; in order to become Catalog (it’s a plural), you must “know guilt,” lest you cannot recognize and properly report it. In short, these strange individuals tote recording gear and stay as neutral as possible, going so far into their strange dictum as to efface all instances of the individual; the entire Forerunner civilization’s history is recorded by its worst felons. How interesting! Several individual Catalogs are examined throughout the book, and it was always a pleasure to see the well-established characters interacting with them, especially as time went on. They’re likely a stand-in for the media, which the Forerunner appear to lack, but an effective analogue; when a character is in dire straits, they reach out to Catalog, only to be observed and cataloged as they fail.. When they’re angry, they take it out on Catalog. When they’re happy, they forget that catalog is not a friend, but a recording mechanism; Bear captured with deft clarity the insane relationship we have with our media today, and its obsession with chronicling every waking moment.

The Juridicals and Catalog form two of a many-pronged narrative web. Also serving as foci are both Didacts and the Librarian, among others. With the exception of the Bornstellar-Didact, each other narrative takes place in different time periods (until the end when they come together); the original Didact’s narrative examines his time between the end of Cryptum and during Primordium, as well as chronicling his dissent into despairing insanity. The Librarian’s narrative thread jumps back a thousand years to her trip out of the galaxy (literally) to investigate the fate of the Precursors.

Indeed, that narrative thread, the Librarian’s investigation, was perhaps the most meaningful of all because it served to characterize the Forerunners and explain their stuffy, law-bound selves more than the previous two novels. I won’t spoil the reasoning for you, but I felt that it cumulated nicely, however unpredictable it was. Motivation is great characterization, and guilt is even better; her trip validates the decisions made at the end of the novel.

This hydra-structure will be distinctly unfamiliar to many Halo readers; for the most part, the books are fairly chronological and entirely sequential in their structures. Bear’s willingness to break the mold to tell a bigger story is appreciated and understood. Though it might bow a bit under its own mass, it effectively answers the major hanging questions and drives the novel towards its inevitable conclusion; I can’t say I was a huge fan of how “montage” it became towards the end (emulating *The Dark Knight Rises*), but there is a certain limit to how much space can be afforded wallowing loss. Instead, Bear gives us insight into the Didact’s drop into insanity, the Librarian’s edging hopelessness, and the Master Builder’s final push to seize power and cauterize the Forerunner’s sins, all of which are accounted during the course of the novel. And it is horrific.

My one strong complaint is that the book feels very much a “lead-in” to Halo 4; Requiem, the planet-fortress, is name-dropped as often as possible. The Prometheans, warrior-servants to the Didact, are a frequent mention; indeed, even the Librarian’s “geas” technology, which inscribes the personalities of long-dead humans, is brought up as control of the Composer is lost and regained and lost again; it feels very much like a surreal prequel to Halo 4, rather than a direct conclusion of a trilogy. With that in mind it’s almost a

shame that this novel didn't come out before Halo 4, since, you know, a ton of the poorly answered or unaddressed questions are all answered in Silentium.

However, that doesn't qualify it as a "bad" novel. I'm a huge fan of the experimental structure of the novel; many of the best sci-fi novels don't have strictly linear, chronological guts. In fact, the best don't. If Halo is moving towards a more mature, artistic plane, than this is what needs to happen; authors need to be given the freedom to experiment and shuffle the plot into attractive, challenging forms. Indeed, had Bear not been able to structure Silentium so haphazardly, its media-criticizing analogy would fall flat. The novel reads almost like the sloppy 24-hour coverage of some major catastrophe, with slightly contradicting statements, high bias, and the rough outline of too little information; I like that it reads like that, genuinely. I don't expect an even, level-headed chronicle of the collapse of a civilization when they're the only ones left to record it.

Halo: Silentium is the best book in the trilogy. It's the one that validates reading the first two, ties them up and makes a complete picture of the puzzle. I was a fan of the Ringworld-lite aspects of Halo: Primordium, and I liked the earnest camaraderie in Halo: Cryptum, but the third and final book in Bear's trilogy pushes the envelope for what Halo can be, and it includes serious social awareness of the caliber that makes me respect the Halo fiction as something more than your run-of-the-mill contract novel. I loved that such strong characters--and so integral to the universe--can be represented as flawed, three dimensional beings whose feelings can be hurt and hearts broke, whose tempers can spiral out of control, and whose spiteful, vindictive egos can ruin entire civilizations. If they began as nebulous demigods playing politics with galaxies, the Forerunner ended as flesh-and-blood children squabbling to the last over how to hide from the things that go bump in the night.

At the beginning of this review, I posed a question: Does the world end with a bang or a whisper? The answer is that it doesn't matter, when only cold dead monuments remain to bear witness. Fans of Halo have little excuse to skip this entry; it's a clear signal of the maturation of the universe we love so dearly.

Anton says

This is the conclusion to the Forerunner Saga in the Halo universe. I must say that it's a very good read for serious science fiction fans with the prerequisite that you read the prequels.

The Forerunner Saga is truly an epic tale with a grand vista of culture, heroes, pride, atrocity, loss, and love that hearkens to a time approximately some 100,000 years ago with mention of events going back several million years.

Silentium continues the story of the forerunner hero Didact as he struggles with loss, betrayal and treachery to fight for his very survival and find a final defense against the indomitable and all consuming galactic scourge known as the Flood. The story compasses the journey of Librarian aka Lifeshaper who leaves our Milky Way galaxy and travels to Path Kethona(Small Magellanic Cloud) in hopes of finding clues of Flood origins. Librarian learns that it was Forerunners who annihilated their Precursor makers in pride, anger and jealousy when it was revealed that the Mantle of responsibility for the upkeep and nurturing of life was to be passed to Humanity. It was Humans who waged a galactic war that possibly could have destroyed Forerunners. Forerunner victory was only certain because mankind was severely weakened after fighting and defeating Flood in a full-scale war. After genocide the Mantle was kept by Forerunners for millions of years with all previous circumstantial memory erased. The Flood is revealed to be one of the final forms taken by the last vestiges of Precursor culture, mis-shapen and twisted, an amalgam of mutation, death and a perversion of life and yet a brilliant intellect with powers and technological prowess beyond the understanding of the greatest minds known.

This is also the tale of the end of the Forerunner race and the sad but heroic attempts by Librarian as she attempts to thwart Flood incursion and save the last remnants of the human race despite the madness of

Didact's mental state after being infected by a Flood meme. Didact attempts to use the last humans as a final countermeasure while Librarian comes to the knowledge that activation of the Halo arrays would not just destroy Flood, Human, Forerunner and organic intelligence. Halo activation would destroy all neural physics which is the implacable technology employed by precursors and the substrate of Domain. Domain was but the greatest repository of wisdom ever created by Precursors and stored in a quantum state and to be accessed by all intelligence capable of the Mantle.

The story ends with the sacrifice of Librarian and remaining forerunners in the attempt to save a few remaining intelligent species (humans foremost) and the seeming eradication of Flood. Ultimately this story ends on a sad and poignant note with the revelation that most if not all achievements of grand ages past would be relegated to rumor and legend. It certainly fills the void and answers questions raised by readers of the previous Halo books and the gamers who play single player campaign.

Iztari says

The last book in the Forerunner trilogy doesn't hold back. It closes most if not all the storylines started in the first two books. A must read for Halo fans.

Alexander says

[The entire premises of the shield worlds being an alternative to the Halos are ignored, and in fact the shield worlds are used to protect against the Halo array. Although only 1 of the shield worlds were filled with 1 Forerunner...? This seems idiotic. There are hundreds of shield worlds that for some reason the forerunners thought otherwise for surviving...

The Halo Array kills all sentinel life. Although does not address how it can be defended against inside the

Fred Hughes says

Having met, in the first book of this series called "Cryptum", the Didact: who is a Forerunner warrior frozen in the Cryptum, Bornstelllar: the inquisitive young Forerunner who releases him, and Chakas and Riser: two human variations on the planet Erde-Tyrene this book carries on with the discovery of an Autonomous Mechanical Intelligence (Forerunner Monitor) device by a science team.

The monitor contains Chakas' memories and proceeds to describe Chakas' memories of his life and what happened to him after the battle at the end of book one.

Along the way the device tells a story that at times the science team finds hard to believe except that some key pieces of information match that from other sources

In this the final book in the trilogy we are again privy to thirty-nine strings of Forerunner data. This is a great way to tell a story and engage the reader as it is a different perspective.

In this volume I found that without the benefit of the first two stories it could be confusing. So best to read

volumes one and two. They are both great stories so that's a benefit.

The Flood is taking over the entire galaxy and the Master Builder is brought back, put in charge, and ordered to end the war with the Flood. Unfortunately the only way to do that is with a secret weapon hidden away and with a really bad side effect.

It appears that the Flood is going to take over the galaxy but the mater builder still has that secret weapon available.

Dense reading at times it is none the less a get a story and addition to the HALO series.
Recommended

Jesse Booth says

This is an incredible book. If you struggled through the first 2, don't cast this book aside. It will answer many questions you have, and reveal the devastating end of the Forerunners.

Instead of chapters, this book uses "Strings." Essentially, it jumps from important character to important character in the first person. You get to be in the head of the Librarian, the Ur Didact, the Iso Didact (Bornstellar), and even Chakas (343 Guilty Spark). It is beautifully connected to the Halo games, as you learn about the ark and how it's portal was created on Earth by the Librarian, how Chakas was assigned to Installation 04, and why the Didact ends up hating the human race so passionately, as he does in Halo 4.

Greg Bear did a fantastic job. I cruised through the book, eating up every word of every chapter.

This series was phenomenal. The Sci-Fi elements used are amazing, and this trilogy proves that it belongs in the spectacular Halo lore.

Joe says

Greg Bear's Forerunner trilogy was always quite unlike the other books, and games, in the Halo franchise. It felt to me very much like "big" sci-fi, highly evocative, dealing with technologies and concepts so advanced as to be akin to magic. The games, and other books, have always focused on humanity in the not-entirely distant future, and thus have felt quite familiar, as if contemporary man was given the ability to colonise the stars and a few very smart AIs. The Forerunner that Bear's books focus on, however, are a different story entirely.

The first book was interesting, and relatively straightforward in the way it was written. The second book introduced a new framing device that tied it more closely to the "present" of the Halo series, but was also from the perspective of a different character, a primitive human, and thus a lot of what happened was extremely, deliberately confused and confusing, seen through the eyes of someone who themselves did not understand what was happening around them. The third book again introduces a new framing device that is both much easier to follow, but also much broader in scope, and is by far the strongest in the trilogy and most likely the strongest Halo book to date.

If nothing else, Bear has done a magnificent job consolidating the various bits of contradictory lore and

history that had already appeared in past Halo games and books, creating a logical - albeit complex - backstory for the Forerunner and the Halo installations themselves. Though all three books dealt with the encroaching Flood and the war the Forerunner fought against it, *Silentium* (view spoiler). The tension ratchets up throughout as the inevitable approaches, all the while shedding new light on why the Halo rings were created and were so necessary, and the desperate extent to which the Forerunner battled against the Flood. It also does much to elaborate upon the characters of the Didact and the Librarian, so fundamental to the plot of Halo 4 (at time of my writing this review, the most recent Halo game).

I don't know to what degree Bear might be a fan of the games or just a hired gun for 343 Studios, but he has produced an overall excellent trilogy (middle chapter aside, though it is important to the full arc of the story). My favourite aspect of it is that it draws upon snippets of history from earlier games: the Domain terminals of Halo 4, of course, but also the quite contradictory terminals found in Halo 3. Perhaps most poignantly, after all that is revealed over the course of the trilogy, it recalls (view spoiler)

C4 says

BEFORE YOU READ THIS, DO KNOW THAT THERE ARE SPOILERS AHEAD.

Silentium. Meaning silence, stillness, or obscurity. We find out why the Forerunners were forced into silentium in the book *Halo: Silentium*. Written by Greg Bear, winner of two Hugos and five Nebulas, this book takes us to the last days of the Forerunners – the most superior and most powerful race in the galaxy. The two main characters are the Didact and the Librarian. The Didact was once the leader of all the Warrior-Servants – the class of Foreunners whose duty is to protect and defend the rest of Foreunners – but is now trapped and abandoned by an old enemy in a spacecraft helplessly floating toward a mass of the Forerunners' greatest enemy – the Flood. But I'll get to the Flood later.

The Librarian, on the other hand, is at the home world of another race called Human. She is the wife of the Didact, and is in the Lifeworker class, a class which focuses on the research and identification of all life in the galaxy. The Librarian herself is known as the Lifeshaper, because she is the leader of all the Lifeworkers. The Librarian and her comrades are busy collecting humans so that they can be saved from the oncoming doom of all life in the galaxy.

While the Didact and the Librarian are the main characters, the book technically isn't from either of their points of view. It's from the point of view of Catalog. Catalog is a Foreunner/machine mix and is solely used for the recording of testimonies and events that happen across the galaxy. Everything throughout the book is events told to and seen by Catalog.

Now, before I get to everything else, let me explain the Flood. The Flood is not water, but acts like it very much in the way it can easily overwhelm and take over almost anything on Earth. The Flood is an alien race unlike any other. The Flood's food is anything living. A single flood spore is very small, crawling on a few little legs. But when it attaches itself and begins to feed on a living thing, it takes control over that being's body, and it mutates to look very gross and disgusting and vile and revolting and... you get the point. Whoever it took over is dead now basically. The spore's just using their body now. Oh yeah, and the Flood spores are created very, very fast. And they travel in very large numbers. So pretty much, if you were to run into a group of Flood spores, you're dead. The Flood spreads very quickly. Quickly enough that they can destroy an entire race.

So the Didact, he wants to use a machine called the composer, which takes living things, and transforms them into living machines, so that the Flood cannot infect them. And the Didact wants the Humans to be the ones "composed" as sort of an ironic vengeance, because the Didact hates Humanity. Why? That's a different story. This is the third book of the Foreunner Trilogy, so there are a lot of "different" stories. The Didact wants to then use the composed Humans to fight off the Flood, enabling the Foreunners to survive. But the Librarian knows the Foreunners are destined to fall. She knows that it is the Humans that are meant to be the rulers of the galaxy after the Foreunners. That's the main reason she and her fellow

Lifeworkers are taking Humans so that they can be safe from what will ultimately be the solution to defeating the Flood – activating the Halo Array. These giant, Foreunner–built ringworlds were made to destroy all sentient life in the galaxy – thus leaving the Flood without food, and being eventually forced to starve and die off.

The Didact is extremely opposed to killing all life, because it is the Foreunners' duty, since they are the rulers of the galaxy, to uphold what is called The Mantle of Responsibility – upholding all life in the galaxy. And since firing the Halos would kill all life, that would be violating all the Foreunners have ever known. But it is the only way to ultimately save the galaxy and kill the parasite. And the Didact cannot accept this. That's why he wants to use the composer, and to protect the Foreunners, he builds shield worlds, hallow planets, that will keep out the Flood.

And so on the day the Halos are to be fired, the Didact arrives, and composes almost all of the Humans the Librarian saved for safekeeping during the firing. In order to stop the mad husband she once loved, the Librarian follows the Didact to one of his shield worlds, Requiem, and eventually locks him in a cryptum, which will keep him alive for hundreds of years, so that he may rethink all of the things he has done, and hopefully realize that the Halos were the only solution.

Not long after, with the remaining Humans stored safely in the Arc, a place built to protect the Humans from getting killed, the Halo Rings are fired. The Flood is finally destroyed, and the Humans will eventually emerge, millions of years later, as the caretakers of the galaxy, upholding the Mantle of Responsibility. All the Foreunners are gone. All except one. One particular Foreunner that was safe inside a shield world that protected him from the Halos firing. But the Didact is yet to be freed from his cryptum. And the Halos are yet to be discovered by the unsuspecting Humans. And one specific Human is going to have the greatest adventure of all when they find it. He is known as the Master Chief.

I really enjoyed this book. It was really cool to see how it tied the books and the future games together. While it was a little slow throughout the first half, once it got going, I couldn't put it down. I would obviously recommend this to any Halo fan who likes to read and/or is really into the lore of it all. Greg Bear did a very good job with the entire series, which by the way, the first two books are Halo: Cryptum and Halo: Primordium. I would also recommend this to basically any science fiction fan. It's a lot like Star Wars in that it takes place throughout a galaxy not far away, but definitely a long time ago. The story is a little more dramatic, but I thought it gave it all a nice feel and really helped define the meaning of being Foreunner.

Laura says

This may be a licensed title but Bear has created a tale of inter-galactic scale war that stands on it's own. Ancient and spectacularly technically advanced cultures war over who will control the Milky Way many millennia ago, setting the stage for the Halo games. While there are some references to "present day" that only a Halo fan will get, this trilogy is solidly built hard-sf with complete cultures and worlds, epic scale betrayals, greed, tragedy and love.

I particularly liked that so much of this book of the trilogy was told in the voice of the Librarian: the mysterious mother figure who did all she could to save humanity from extinction. Her voice was as melodic and poetic, yet strong and scheming as one would expect from a woman revered as a goddess by all whom she saved. The strong, smart, interesting female characters are what keep me hooked on this universe.

Niko Thomas says

I feel like this is a perfect conclusion to the series. It tied up most, if not all of the loose ends left in the other books, and really gives you a sense of closing, finally knowing more about the Precursors, the origin of the Flood, and the final days of the Forerunner Empire.

It also gives a perfect reason for why the Didact is who he is in the video game series, and not more like the IsoDidact or even the Didact in the previous books for that matter.

I would recommend the book to all science fiction lovers!

Thanks for a superb wrap up, Mr. Bear.

Richard says

I guess you really need to read the first two books before this one.

Moayad Taibah says

[

The end of the Forerunners and the Forerunner saga. This is the last book of Greg Bear's depiction of the forerunner's story and it had an awesome ending to the series of events that lead to the end of all life on the galaxy...For a long time anyhow.

The book continues the story from the point of view of catalogs, a detective like android (if you can name forerunners infused with tech as su

Andrew says

Halo: Silentium is the final book in Greg Bear's Forerunner trilogy, set millennia before the events of the games. It continues the story of the Didact and Librarian, as well as several other familiar characters from the first two books.

Similarly to Primordium, Silentium is a bit of a framed narrative - ONI has discovered some Forerunner artifacts and has extracted information from them and put it together in a way that tells the story. Since not everything is necessarily in chronological order or continuous, there are some jumps and abrupt transitions, but there's a purpose and meaning to each thread.

Some things that were hinted at in previous works are explained outright and in more depth, and new secrets about the Precursors, the Forerunners, the Humans, and the Flood are revealed. If you're a fan of the Halo universe, you know how the story is going to end. This only makes it more powerful though, in my mind, as you see the possible choices slowly focus down to one inevitable course of events.

The end left some things open and was a slight letdown, but shortly after the book was published it was revealed that there is actually a coda that expands upon the ending, making it more satisfactory. You can find out about that by going [here](#). I don't think it's necessary for enjoying the story, but it certainly helps but a

bow on things. There are still a few questions I'd like answered, however, and I look forward to finding out more in future stories.

In the end, I thoroughly enjoyed Silentium and tore through it in two sittings. By the last fifty pages or so I couldn't even put it down. If you're a Halo fan, this entire series is a must-read. Science fiction fans will certainly appreciate it as well.
