

the melodic line'.<sup>157</sup> In 《NieR: Automata》, the melancholic mood of <2. *City Ruin*> is the main ascending line while the delightful contrasts made by <12. *Emil's Shop*> serves as the breathing spaces. With their parallel placement, the tension gets chances to slacken for a while, therefore the whole piece could ensure the resumption of the chase is more effective.<sup>158</sup> 'A tragedy will not loosen its grip after the climax ; but before it, on the long way up to it, provision might well be made for some temporary, refreshing laughs. They will help the reader or spectator to brace himself for the ever tightening grip of the plot', concluded Toch.<sup>159</sup> In other words, the simultaneous presence of two different melodic lines helps the players maintain the intense mood without feeling overload, and prepare themselves to embrace the last gigantic climax to come.

## ② **Silence** : *Seamless, Decisive moments*

*"Listening begins with being silent."*—Joachim-Ernst Berendt

'In NieR:Automata, our goal is to connect several wide areas seamlessly, aiming to let the players explore different locations freely and enjoy the natural scenery—especially in City Ruins, the centre of the game world', said Kaji Yasuyuki, the environmental artist at PlatinumGames.<sup>160</sup> It is clear that "seamless" was indeed one of the chief principles when designing the game, both visually and aurally. According to Okabe, for each soundtrack, there are 3 versions—Quiet, Normal, and Dynamic—which are created to adopt different situations in the game. In the quiet version especially, the director Yoko was pretty demanding and requested them several times to remove "too much sound" from the piece. Composer Hoashi observed that 'the requests from Yoko sometimes would make the track so it "doesn't sound like music" which made me a bit worried ; however, this modified "quiet music" amazingly matched NieR's world when I heard

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<sup>157</sup> Toch, *op. cit.*, p.161 \* The numbers refer to bar code of "Meistersinger", but in terms of game, we can regard them as the boss fights of different levels here. The coloured notes and texts are added by this study.

<sup>158</sup> Toch, *op. cit.*, p.138

<sup>159</sup> Toch, *op. cit.*, p.160-161

<sup>160</sup> Taura, T. (2016, August 4). 『NieR:Automata』 プラチナゲームズ開発現場ご紹介#02. [Web log post] PlatinumGames official website. Retrieved from <https://www.platinumgames.co.jp/dev-nier-automata/article/27>

them inside the game'.<sup>161</sup> Okabe added that 'these "quiet version" are actually very useful when changing from one tune to another, which makes the whole game much more connected and more seamless while playing. This is probably the reason why Yoko insisted that sounds were "as less as possible".<sup>162</sup> Following the previous discussion, these music of "quiet version" could be understood as the ambience layer (Layer 1) that usually begins to play when the player is approaching a location and gradually fades out when the player is leaving for the next place.

Considering there is always full track or ambient music in the background, incorporating silence into the game could be the best way to create contrast. Huiberts found that 'the use of silence can also improve focus and concentration, as a sudden silence can make our hearing very alert (Murray Schafer, 1977, p.259)'.<sup>163</sup> For example, at the last Boss fight with Eve in gameplay 8, which is supposed to be the toughest battle right before the ending A, 2B and 9S only successfully cut Eve's right hand during the combat music <**25. Depending Weakling**> (21:54-25:53). About 20 seconds later, the new combat music <**37. The Sound of the End**> starts to play (26:14), signalling that the battle is not over. Along with its multi-layer composition, a female vocal was singing softly while 2B was determined to chop Eve's head. Suddenly, the music ceased the moment 2B slashed Eve's neck (28:54-29:07). Thus, the silence shows that the battle with Eve is truly finished. During this 7-minute long battle, the mere 20-seconds of lasting silence is undoubtedly the most powerful part of the scene (see Appendix #3).

Besides using silence for such particular moments as shown above, there are other specific occasions in 《NieR: Automata》 where the seamless soundscape is broken down by silence, including defeated in the battles, making a wrong decision and dying, and all the campaign stories of the Machine Lifeforms, Bosses and Pods. Based on the gameplay videos (1-21) by Shirrako, the protagonists from gameplay 1-8 lead to Ending A is 2B, while with almost the same route, 9S becomes the protagonist in gameplay 9-15

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<sup>161</sup> Saito and Kaneko, *op. cit.*, p.5

<sup>162</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>163</sup> Huiberts, *op. cit.* p.65