

III. Creating empathy with the avatar – Ending C

The music order of Ending A and B are the same : **⟨14. Vague Hope–Cold Rain⟩** then **⟨26. Rebirth & Hope ⟩** , followed by the monologue of 2B and 9S, and then the theme song **⟨15. Weight of the World⟩** plays as the final credit music. The only difference between these two endings is that the theme song for Ending A is English version while the Japanese version **⟨15-1.⟩** plays at Ending B, as we've discussed earlier. However, the Ending C has alternative music to represent the final cut scene :

⟨24. Mourning⟩ plays when A2 runs to repair 9S' corrupted circuits. Then, after she has asked Pod 042 to take care of 9S, the theme song in Nouveau–FR version **⟨15-2.⟩** plays to accompany A2's monologue till the end of the credit. Compared to 2B and 9S, who appear as the heroine/hero of justice at the beginning, **A2** is presented as a Boss to fight against when she first shows up at gameplay 5 (53:32–56:55). Who could have predicted that an antagonist would become a protagonist, controlled by players during the gameplay? Player AKSBSU's experience summaries the mental process of having empathy with characters well : 'When I was introduced to A2, it seemed like she was an almost feral killing machine in [route] A and B with seemingly no redeeming qualities. How my opinion changed over time. She gave 2B a merciful, dignified death, preserved 2B's memories, spared 9S multiple times, was honest throughout, and we learn the horrific past she endured shaping who she became. I loved the way my perceptions of 2B and 9S changed over time as well and feel great sympathy for all of them. The three protagonists were fantastic characters'.³⁹³ Especially in Ending **C**, the decision of sacrificing herself and giving 9S' life truly turns A2 into a guardian angel, a promise-keeper, instead of a villainous traitor.

IV. Music as evaluation– Ending D & E

The research findings by Huiberts revealed that the superimposed music does not merely express what has happened and help the player to **reflect upon** it, but also

³⁹³ Shirrako. (2017, February 24). Nier Automata - Ending D & True Ending E (Secret TRUE Ending). [YouTube]. *Comment*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxmOa5su7O4&list=PLCLLeSTzz6trYrOxS1anPprphUxjuOXBAA&index=21&t=3s>

provides the player with a **new direction** and new motivation to continue.³⁹⁴ Following the similar pattern of previous endings, Ending **D** is accompanied by soundtrack **<14.>** when 9S' fading consciousness is typed on the white screen, as shown in Figure 41.

"Will you come with us?" asks Adam.
The question was completely free of malice.
It seemed I no longer had a reason to hate machines.
Maybe I never had a reason in the first place.

What have I been fighting for?
Who have I been *living* for?

I don't know anymore.

Figure 41. 9S' will at Ending D

Then, two options –'I'll go with you' and 'I'll stay'–appear on the screen. After the player makes his/her choice, the theme song **<15-2.>** plays in the background to accompany the launch of the ark from the Tower. The brutal truth of the story is that the YoRHa's black box circuitry is made from cores of the machines. Namely, the android is the same creation as machines, made by God or Aliens. 9S' final words delineate the worldview that director Yoko wants us to question : What it means to be **alive without any clear purpose** and without even **the opportunity to die gracefully** (being mechanical beings, androids are reincarnated by means of data uploads after their deaths).³⁹⁵ Further, as the gamified violence in Yoko's game is designed largely to be fun, it throws more conflicting emotions and questions toward the players. 'That oxymoron-ish feeling of being between why does it feel so good to defeat an enemy? And why do I feel so much guilt in defeating an enemy?– that's an internal battle that we as humans always have', said by Yoko.³⁹⁶ Iwamoto's observation provided a valuable view to reflect on how we can enable such contradictory feelings through music : 'If we consider "time" as the "canvas size" of music, most of the scenes in 《NieR: Automata》 are united by one

³⁹⁴ Huiberts, *op. cit.*, p.99

³⁹⁵ Muncy, *op. cit.*, p.3 *The emphasis is added by this study.

³⁹⁶ Muncy, *op. cit.*, p.4 *The emphasis is added by this study.

soundtrack for long time—either it just present as the ambience in background, or plays as the full version to accompany the battles. The seamless feature makes the pieces have greater scale, similar to a big canvas that enables vocals—the human voices—to come in freely. Namely, the battles and the living world of characters are tightly connected in one soundtrack, which demonstrates Yoko’s thoughts about wars and the world well’, as Iwamoto reviewed.³⁹⁷ The seamless connection between wars and the ambience functions as a metaphor of our ordinary life : we are fighting for living, and the living is fighting—where the battle/challenge is always coming one after another. The viewpoint of Iwamoto shows that the music usage of 《NieR: Automata》 not only supports the emotional dynamics within the game, but also enriches director’s philosophy aurally and profoundly.

Besides reflecting upon the game through music, the other important function that music can contribute to immersion is supplying new directions. ‘Yoko requested us to produce the theme song in three different versions—English, Japanese and the made-up language—at the beginning. After we finish the composition, he hoped we could add an extra version which is sung by the production team due to the purpose of the game. So, Yoko, producer Mr. Saito and I also sang with the staff of PlatinumGames in 〈**15-3. Weight of the World—the End of YoRHa**〉 version which is used for Ending **E**’, described Okabe.³⁹⁸ ‘According to Yoko, the concept of this game is about “**self and others**”, so for me, this is a very meaningful soundtrack, in terms of the entire performance and experiences of the game’, commented Okabe.³⁹⁹

In truth, this intention is well received by players, as Kamiyama pointed out : ‘When I confronted the last shooting mission which was pretty hard to break through, I died many times and almost wanted to give up. However, since I chose “online mode” to play the game, it enabled me to ask for help. Once I clicked Yes, the chorus came in the music and many encouraging messages popped up instantly on the screen, which come

³⁹⁷ Iwamoto, *op. cit.*, p.19-22

³⁹⁸ Saito and Kaneko, *op. cit.*, p.4

³⁹⁹ Nagayoshi, *op. cit.*, p.24 * The emphasis is added by this study.