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Project Lazarus: A Revival of the Human Experience in a Technological Age

Introduction

It was a secluded cove, numb from the noises of civilization and bursting with freshness as the trickle of a stream sneaked by and the looming trees seemed to chase me. Accustomed to gazing into the abyss of my phone every night and slumbering in the warm safety of my home, I was not prepared for the harsh withdrawal of living completely immersed in nature with no electricity and internet. My body ached as we drudged on in the cold, windy, and rainy days, adjusting to the elements and physical labor as I developed poison ivy scars all over my burly tanned limbs. Even so, I gained a deeper experience of fulfillment through the raw experience of interacting with nature in the simple moments of rubbing my hands against clay, shoveling dirt and carrying wheelbarrows around the building site, finding it oddly meditative and entertaining. I forgot about digital entertainment because I found this to be genuine. However, after the end of the month-long experience, I succumbed back into the alluring embrace of digital technology, allowing for myself to become an emotional cyborg. This experience left lingering questions about the stark contrast between how I felt more authentically human when simply interacting with nature as opposed to digital technology, evolving into the concept of an experience-focused project highlighting the emotionality of living in nature as opposed to living as apathetic cyborgs in a digital landscape.

Utilizing experiences of natural living, I seek to explore how modern interactions with nature versus digital technology relate to improving a lack of compelling emotional experiences through a visual narrative video-game that will be played outdoors within nature. It depicts ideas on emotional responses to interactivity with nature and how that is shaped in a technological age in *Project Lazarus*, an interactive organic material-styled multiple-choice visual novel that prompts the audience to question their own conflicting relationship with desiring nature yet immersing themselves within technology and how they feel in response to an immersive emulation of both lifestyles.

Contextual Discussion

The idea of mood benefits from interacting with nature was based in the early 20th century by American Research Engineer Dr. Clarence Handell in 1932 in his discovery of the biological effects of ionic air through observable behavioral effects in test subjects whenever a tesla coil's and electrostatic generator's polarity was switched to release different ions (Mindell 2016, 6)¹. When emitting negative ions, test subjects felt elated, whereas they became aggressive and depressed when positive ions were released. According to Dr. Earl Mindell's book *The Happiness Effect: The Positive Benefits of Negative Ions* (2016)², negative ions and positive ions build up the basis for energy emitted in our environment. Within Handell's (1932) research, it notes a negative ionic abundance in nature--emitted from plants, thunderstorms, oceans or waterfalls, while positive ions are found in heating and air-conditioning systems, TVs, radios, computers, exhausts, smog, radiation, toxic chemicals, etc. Increased exposure to positive ions render subjects feeling anxious and despondent, relating to a modern dilemma of complete confinement by electronic devices (Mindell 2016, 8)³. An immersed lifestyle in nature appears harsh and laborious compared to our digital comforts, yet emotional fulfillment and health improvements can be established by living harmoniously with nature, especially when considering how this shapes our future technologically integrated lifestyle.

Concerning the concept of living in harmony with nature, John Ikerd's article "In Harmony with Nature" for the University of Missouri examines the anthropological battle between humans and nature, with nature portrayed as a primitive threat (2000). To survive these natural struggles, we do so by establishing dominance, claiming a utilitarian right to conquer nature and pluck resources out according to our desires, suffering by inducing natural catastrophes. We utilize to bolster our own cravings for biological control, comforting our fear of inevitable death. Learning to embrace nature and its due consequences from living parasitically is integral to assimilate into nature. The principle of sustainable agriculture deconstructs the capitalist model of endlessly consuming to survive and brings gratification

¹ Mindell, Earl. *The Happiness Effect: the Positive Benefits of Negative Ions*. Garden City Park, NY: Square One Publishers, 2016.

² Mindell, Earl, *The Happiness Effect: the Positive Benefits of Negative Ions*, 2016

³ Mindell, *The Happiness Effect: the Positive Benefits of Negative Ions*, 8.

and validation through defining a quality life as filled with manufactured goods rather than welcoming a balance of physical and emotional nourishing. Ikerd proposes, “harmony can be found through re-establishing a positive relationship with a higher order--nature” (2000, 11).⁴

This theory of relationship marketing ascertains believing that the process of enjoyment in our actions determines happiness, rather than a consumptive reward. Ikerd states,

“Our satisfaction is not dependent on realizing the expectations of some future personal reward, but our reward is embedded in our current actions. This is inherent in living and working in harmony. Gaining more of one thing without having more of another only serves to create an imbalance and emotional dissatisfaction” (2000, 18)⁵.

Ikerd’s thought reflects our inner imbalance, pointing to sustainable natural living as a solution by living with a pet, integrating plantlife, sunlight, and open fireplaces as well as utilizing minimal electronic technology to promote relationship marketing and contentedness.

Moving into the digital realm, the mechanization of society into an increasingly consumerist and electronic landscape has been linked to positive innovations towards making life easier, yet we are still left feeling emotionally depleted (Ikerd 2000, 21)⁶. In response to this, many have resorted to the sustainable living movement in removing digital technology and establishing an active relationship with nature. However, I argue, the lingering question for technology is: How is digital immersion wrong if we derive pleasure from it? Moreso, with innovative technology moving into blending the real world with the digital world, are we not already living in harmony with both?

This can be answered through the digital escapism of augmented or mixed reality, as exemplified in the massively popular phone game, *Pokémon Go*, created and developed by *Niantic*. In the journal article “Phenomenology, Pokémon Go, and other Augmented Reality Games: A Study of Life Among Digital Objects” (Liberati 2018)⁷, it examines how intertwining our tangible surroundings with the digital world

⁴ Ikerd, John. “In Harmony with Nature.” In *Harmony with Nature*. Accessed April 23, 2020. <http://web.missouri.edu/ikerdj/papers/HARMONY.html>. 11.

⁵ Ikerd, “In Harmony with Nature.”, 18.

⁶ Ikerd, “In Harmony with Nature.”, 21.

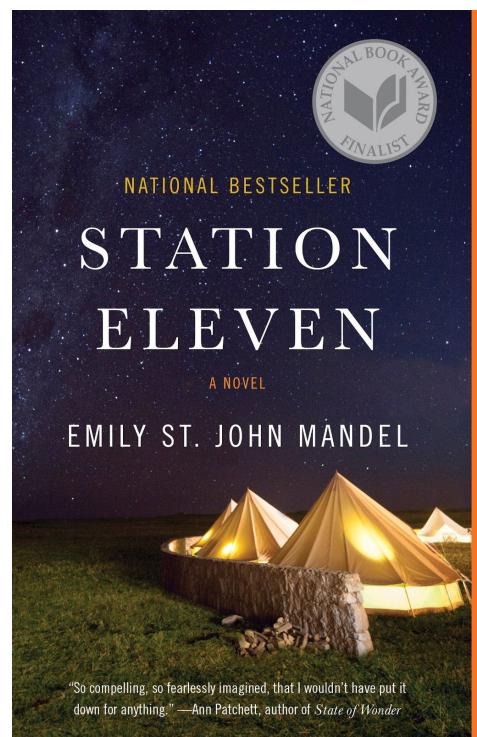
⁷ Liberati, Nicola. “Phenomenology, Pokémon Go, and Other Augmented Reality Games.” *Human Studies* 41, no. 2 (July 2017): 211–32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-017-9450-8>.

affects us. *Pokémon Go* is a game involving battling, capturing and collecting fictional monsters--Pokémon. *Pokémon Go* takes this concept and meshes it with the corporal world through superimposing 3-D rendered Pokémon within one's smartphone into the physical space captured by the camera. Players interact with these digital objects in front of them, with an incentive to capture Pokémon outside to encourage players to escape sedentary lifestyles and interact with nature.

Liberati argues, even if it could feel genuine, these enclosed worlds are fictitious--generated by devices that don't bring us closer to real world objects but instead "...immerse us in a second world where we suspend common concerns about the existence of the world around" (Liberati 2017, 17)⁸. The viewer doesn't perceive a flat screen, but a world inside, feeling themselves escape into the picture. However, only the player's emotions are authentic. Augmented reality only places digital objects in a digitally recreated false space, not integrating the digital element into the player's surroundings. Failing to erase the identification of digital objects as "other things". These digital fantasies are "finite provinces", not feeling less than our reality but built in a different paramount reality that feels genuine. Liberati (2017) disputes that mixed reality cannot blend multiple provinces together, the world of *Pokémon Go* exemplifying this in the statement, "one cannot fully be in both realities at once due to a suspension of doubt and our minds leaping from one to the other" (Liberati 2017, 23).⁹ This brings in new questions of how we can move into a future of implementing both digital and natural forms of fulfillment.

Regarding creative work that brings attention to natural living, *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel (2014)

¹⁰ is a fictional novel about a post-apocalyptic theater group



⁸ Liberati, "Phenomenology, Pokémon Go, and Other Augmented Reality Games.", 17

⁹ Liberati, Nicola, "Phenomenology, Pokémon Go, and Other Augmented Reality Games: A Study of a Life Among Digital Objects.", PhilPapers, 2017.

¹⁰ Image: *Station Eleven* book cover, Vintage Books, 2014.

who perform Shakespeare plays for surviving communities in the Great Lakes region after modern civilization crumbled from a pandemic. *Station Eleven* takes place in multiple timelines--pre-apocalypse, the transition period and the post-apocalypse. Told through multiple perspectives, it illuminates the difficulties of the natural lifestyle and busy technological lifestyle, with our technological world remembered fondly as characters reminisce the simplicities of aiding technologies that helped them to live in comfort.¹¹ They marvel over old magazines, the celebrity gossip and fashion--symbols of the consumerist lifestyle--as ways of living without an awareness of our vulnerability and mortality, living within a safe haven. They manage through struggles of scavenging for food and not succumbing to diseases. Yet, they never acknowledge their confrontation of pain and mortality, unconventionally prioritizing emotional sustenance and natural harmony through performance art, music, poetry, culture, and creating close friendships and romances with each other as the definition of a life full of quality. The travelers see the benefits of a natural lifestyle and define fulfilment through the emotions experienced in the process--This idea captured in the book's most defining quote, "Survival is insufficient" (2014, 78).¹²

An interactive narrative documenting natural living is the video game *Walden, a Game*: an exploratory narrative and open world simulation video game based off of first-hand accounts of



philosopher Henry David Thoreau's during his time in 1845 living self-reliant by the Walden Pond in Massachusetts (USC Games, 2017)¹³. The game's goal lies in its meditative emotional experience of immersing oneself in a simplistic natural

¹¹ Mandel, Emily St. John. *Station Eleven: a Novel*. New York: Vintage Books, 2014.

¹² Mandel, *Station Eleven: a Novel*, 78.

¹³ USC Game Innovation Lab, *Walden, a Game*, Windows/Mac, USC Games, 2017.

landscape.¹⁴ The player is prompted to fish, carve arrowheads, and scavenge for food. Players follow Thoreau's footsteps while surrounded by a serene forest landscape. Meanwhile, the tranquil and ambient sounds of nature echo in the background, along with Thoreau's meditative thoughts. *Walden, A Game* brings the outdoors back to modern people to help us remember simplicity and promote a more interactive relationship with nature rather than trying to fill every moment with quick and entertaining consumptive pleasure. Its principles are mirrored today in natural living documentaries such as the Chinese social media influencer, Li Ziqi, who left a modern city life to live with her grandparents in a remote village, planting and harvesting her own crops, blending beeswax and flower petals together to create makeup, and using silkworms and sheep to create her own clothing.¹⁵ Ziqi claimed a lack of emotional fulfillment as a primary drive in moving back to the countryside for a sustainable lifestyle during her decade-long experience working menial jobs in the urban landscape of China (South China Morning Post, 2019).¹⁶ *Project Lazarus* centralizes on calling back to simplicity and the meditative nature of the organic world, through interactions with nature in an intertwined outdoor experience.



Concerning technology in creative narratives, *Brave New World*, a 2015 UK play created by James Dacre and Dawn King based off of Aldous Huxley's dystopian novel, speaks on the foreseeable effects of using technology to rid ourselves of emotional and physical pain. Its protagonist feels dissatisfied with the technologically immersed lifestyle, feeling a need for liberation. With fully integrated technology, the characters live meaninglessly--fulfilling every pleasure through stimulating their pleasure sensors, and

¹⁴ Image: *Walden, a Game* gameplay scenery photograph, USC Games, 2017.

¹⁵ Image: *Li Ziqi Demonstrating Natural Sustainable Living*. South China Morning Post, December 31, 2019.

¹⁶ South China Morning Post, "Chinese Online Star Li Ziqi Provides an Escape from Urban Life", Dec 23 2019, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6z_ia0L7Wc.

through trans-humanoid innovations, they are shallow, unempathetic and intellectually uninspired. The narrative seeks to warn us against scientific utopianism--the act of genetically engineering our bodies and environments into perfect impervious creations. This fabricates an idea of contentment by insinuating technology's power in imitating and replacing nature. The futuristic civilization in *Brave New World* eliminates love, passion, and social connections--creating new humans devoid of emotion (*Brave New World*, 2015).¹⁷

This space-operatic play utilizes a modern thematic and aesthetic flair, focusing on consumptive culture to replace satisfying our well-being and increasing fear of intimacy. The meshing of people standing in front of multiple digital screens displaying expressive naturesque



and technological landscapes illuminates their inner conflict for yearning to feel human through escaping technology, paralleling *Project Lazarus*'s aesthetic and digital/tangible immersion¹⁸.

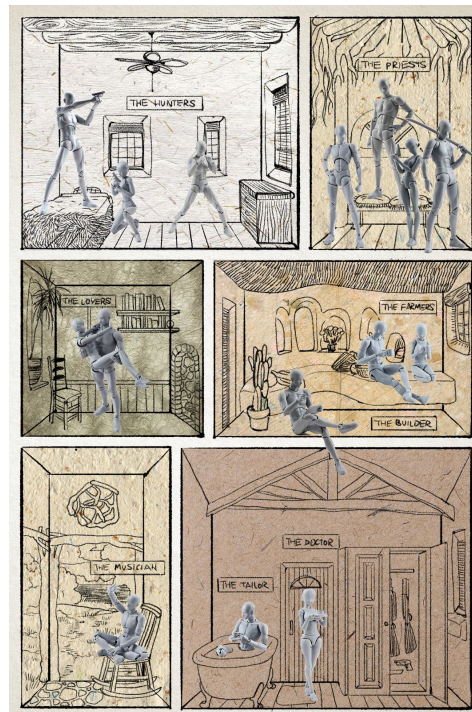
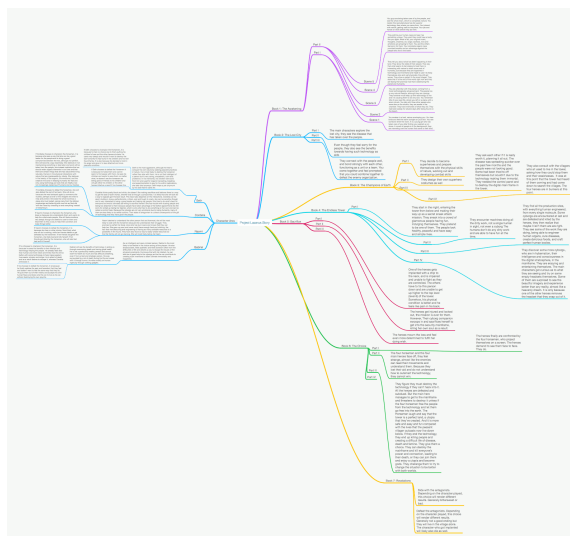
¹⁷ *Brave New World*, directed by James Dacre and Dawn King, based on the novel by Aldous Huxley, Touring Consortium Theater Company, UK, September 4, 2015.

¹⁸ Image: James Dacre and Dawn King's production of *Brave New World*, 2015.

Methodology

Project Lazarus's most substantial process of creation came through concept mapping and mind mapping. Through applying digital note programs like MindNode, a personal blog, and Evernote aided to clearly visualize the research and ideas, it allowed for fluidly navigating the brainstorming process in an organized manner, finding ways to relate each idea to another with reference images and links for visual clarification. For writing out each character profile and a complex continuous narrative, I utilized EverNote, especially employing its ability to create different narrative options based off of each choice the player makes in the game. Processing in-class feedback on the narrative and theme communication within the story, I was able to easily edit and take the story into different directions, employing writing tips from Heidi Kumao's visual narrative course for telling large stories from different perspectives to communicate multifaceted ideas of living in nature versus living in the digital realm.¹⁹

The second method implemented was the exploration and experimentation of materials.²⁰ *Project Lazarus* required a heavy aesthetic reflection of the contrast



¹⁹ Image: *Project Lazarus*'s Narrative organization in MindNode, Charlotte Cardon, 2019.

²⁰ Image: *Project Lazarus*'s exploration of technological and organic textures in natural living spaces, Charlotte Cardon, 2019.

between nature and digital technology, which prompted a generation of visual reflections of nature through visual textures, contour line styles, etc., resulting in a collage-like art style that took both elements from nature (natural wood and paper textures) and juxtaposed them alongside mechanical and electronic aesthetics of sharp geometric

shapes and more smooth, plastic and metal textures for the technological materials in the illustrations that I intended to use towards an interactive comic. I hand-made paper at the *Out of Hand Paper Making Studio* in Ann Arbor, Michigan and photographed the paper, capturing their intricate organic textures from wood pulp, dried leaves and flowers I collected in a local forest, implementing these



naturesque textures within the visual novel's digital drawings.²¹ From in-class feedback, I decided to push the tangible nature-like style further by incorporating an accompanying nature-esque space within the exhibition through compiling strawbale, knit blankets, weaved baskets and logs of wood within an outdoors environment in which the visual novel video-game is to be played in. With countless trial and error in finding a way to create a tangibly interactive narrative, I adjusted the project into being rendered digitally as a Visual Novel video-game. I decided to incorporate an original soundtrack for full nature immersion by implementing weaving together outdoor soundscapes of local woodlands, the waves at the beach, and nocturnal sounds of animals collected through personal recordings using the sound editing program *Audacity*, synthesizing unsettling digital soundscapes and synth music for the technological spaces' ambience using royalty free recordings from FreeSound.com.

The third approach concentrated on exploring the visualized characters and environment, emphasizing aesthetics of simple prairie life within the general north american continent exemplary of

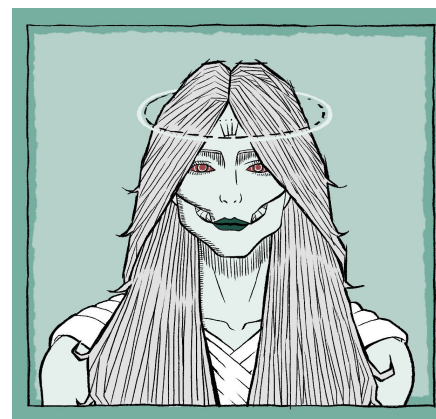
²¹ Image: Hand-crafted paper samples, Charlotte Cardon, 2019.

pre-industrial colonial living before the predominant presence of digital and electronic technology in day-to-day life. I sketched out leather bags, metal pots, and log cabins to include into the environments, as well as four human protagonists representative of the diverse young audience--Cordelia, Seth, Gabriel and Naomi-- with rough, earth-toned hand-sewn outfits, adding physical scars, bruising and infections to signify the physical struggles of natural living.²² The technological environment and cyborgs that live in

our future are contrasted through metal and plastic textures, in addition to clean, synthetic, smooth, futuristic clothing and cool-toned colors. The technology in *Project Lazarus* imitates nature through designs and shapes that allude to irregular and rounded shapes and patterns observed in nature, with the labor androids resembling animals to further a man-made ecosystem--the opposing role of cyborg people reflecting a

future vision of our own bodies integrated with technology.²³

After illustrating, all characters, background images and soundtracks were imported into the visual novel software TyranoBuilder in order to assemble the visual novel game for *Project Lazarus*. During the completion of the Visual Novel in TyranoBuilder, I documented photographs and video footage of myself interacting with *Project Lazarus* in an outdoor wooded area,



²² Image: *Project Lazarus* four protagonists, top left: Cordelia; top right: Seth; bottom left: Gabriel; Bottom right, Naomi; Charlotte Cardon, 2019.

²³ Image: *Project Lazarus* cyborg character illustration, Charlotte Cardon, 2019.

improvising on the cancellation of the public physical exhibition and using in-class feedback to market the visual novel game as something the audience could interact with remotely while immersed in nature.

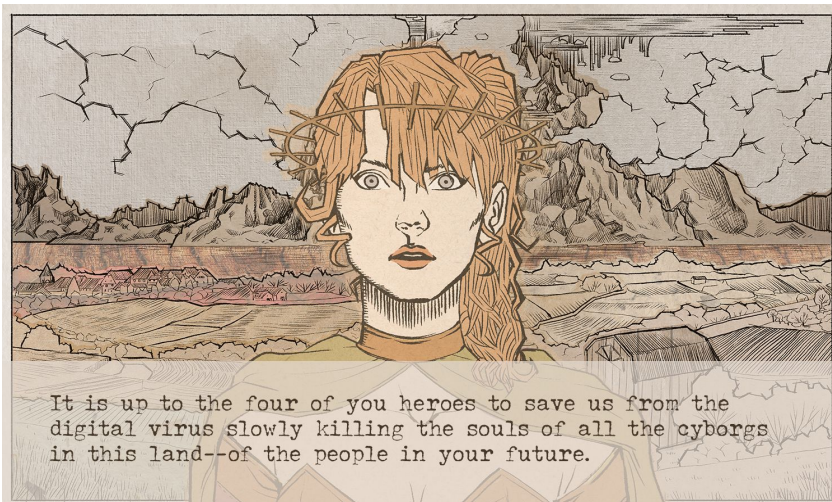
Creative Work

Project Lazarus's narrative centers on a diverse ensemble of modern people time traveling to the distant future 100 years from now only to adjust to navigating a lifestyle of natural living, while learning to appreciate the emotional fulfillment of maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature, even with its hardships. The title, "Project Lazarus", refers to a plan for the protagonists to help the cyborgs of the future awaken from their digital trance and bring forth a rebirth of humanity through regaining a harmonious relationship with nature. Holding their own positive, neutral or negative opinions on technological escapism, they make a decision to embrace a natural lifestyle, or maintain our trajectory towards complete immersion into the digital and electronic realm.

The characters begin the story being transported to the future as a part of a natural renewal project to change our technological destiny. In this natural environment, they learn strenuous physical tasks for survival like chopping wood and building houses. Eventually forgetting their hunger for technological escapism, they find natural living to be more substantial. Due to a digital plague removing the emotions of the villagers, our protagonists realize their roles in helping the cyborgs of the future to not lose the ability to feel human to the technology that they physically depend on. The protagonists venture to destroy technology and create a harmonious relationship with nature in order to alter our future destiny yet find this decision difficult due to the positive impacts of technology. The young, technologically reliant audience of *Project Lazarus* is prompted to make that decision, as predecessors to our real future as technologically integrated beings who will lose our connection to nature and be negatively impacted by an immersion of positive ions.

This visual narrative emphasizes its aesthetic on the principle of contrasting organic and mechanical elements integrated together. It brings together elements that evoke visual qualities of nature and juxtaposes it alongside aesthetics of electronic and digital technology, giving the audience a conflicting emotional response to this form of digital escapism and prompting us to question our own

emotional response to both interacting with nature and technology.²⁴ These conflicting digital and organic mediums/aesthetics are done with intention for awareness of our hypocritical escapist relationships with nature and the digital realm--separating ourselves from real nature through our digital



fabrications of the outdoors.

Project Lazarus combines the digital and natural realm into each others' spaces to illuminate the layers of digital removal within our interactions and how that impacts our emotional desire to escape into nature and technology. It posits the

modern idea of compromise by meshing them both together in one space, illuminating a paradoxical conclusion of needing to sacrifice our physical needs for our emotional needs, vice versa, as *Project Lazarus*' audience learns that we cannot fully connect with both the digital world and natural world at once through modern examples like *Pokemon Go* where it becomes surface-level ways of trying to reconnect with nature.

As a digital-physical experience, *Project Lazarus* prompts an awareness and discussion regarding regaining a human emotional experience and finding happiness within oneself by living non parasitically with a unexploited version of nature, instead of living according to our dependence on consumerism in our movement towards complete technological integration and escapism into the digital realm. The project intends to keep minds open to possibilities of having emotional harmony with both technology and nature. With combined concepts of the scientific benefits of exposure and interactions with nature, learning to live in harmony with nature and discover emotional humanness, as well as living in an age of

²⁴ Image: Snapshot of In-game narrative, character, and background visuals for Project Lazarus. Charlotte Cardon. 2020.

entertaining digital escapism in the forms of mixed reality, *Project Lazarus* creates a distinct emotional experience. It utilizes narrative themes of escaping biological death and nature through technology, learning to experience the subtle slow meditative nature of the organic environment, escaping a destiny of becoming emotional robots, and appreciating nature and the process-based emotional experience as a signifier of a quality of life rather than living according to a consumerist culture.

Conclusion

Project Lazarus reveals possibilities as an artist in crafting combinations between digital media and natural living. Through working with interactive art and game creation softwares, I ascertain my illustrations and narratives reaching new audiences within the gaming industry. This establishes creative and interdisciplinary prospects for video-games and visual novels as substantial works of art rather than simple methods of escapism and entertainment and brings awareness to the issues regarding technological and digital immersion within the technologically escapist audience. The topic of natural living in a technological society has already reached great awareness on social media through the many comments from friends of support for increased interaction with nature and an increased need for self reliance in a natural lifestyle within our current state of social isolation and digital escapism. *Project Lazarus* utilizes an incorporation of digital escapism and outdoor escapism within our overwhelming census in removing ourselves from isolation in digital escapism. With *Project Lazarus*, I believe that interacting with nature can resonate with our young, technologically immersed audience and lead to reshaping our lifestyle of escapism and interaction with the digital and organic for the near future.

Annotated Bibliography

Brave New World, directed by James Dacre and Dawn King, based on the novel by Aldous Huxley, Touring Consortium Theater Company, UK, September 4, 2015.

James Dacre and Dawn King's adaptation of the Aldous Huxley novel *Brave New World* proves to be a unique mixed-media interpretation of a story of future technological transformation of the human body and the human mind into apathetic, cold forms that have lost touch of their own emotions and biological identity. It utilizes simplistic yet expressive visual elements of digitally projected imagery to juxtapose the story's characters alongside obscuring plastic masks and plain grey clothing. It does so to illuminate the loss of self and expression, with digital backdrops and projections of both technological and naturesque aesthetics to illuminate their desire for an escape and reconnection with becoming human again through abandoning the technology and learning to embrace their own vulnerabilities. Although the novel *Brave New World* describes the future landscape and technological integration in great detail, the play brings a creative spark by emphasizing the human expression and visual emotional portrayal of what happens to people when they no longer feel human within a technological lifestyle. *Project Lazarus* takes inspiration from its narrative elements of what life one-hundred years from now may look like, with regards to how the human well being is shaped by this alteration in lifestyle.

Ikerd, John. "In Harmony with Nature." In *Harmony with Nature*. Accessed April 23, 2020.

<http://web.missouri.edu/ikerdj/papers/HARMONY.html>.

Ikerd's article exemplifies a philosophical question on the way that we live in a technological landscape, emphasizing why we hunger for and rely on having a harmonious relationship with nature, often escaping into the outdoors for a taste of what we believe is genuine reality. In a

culture that emphasizes the accumulation of monetary goods as a way to define our happiness and fulfilment, Ikerd presents a different method of perceiving these consumerist beliefs, by looking at the mutual benefits of process-based working, instead of unsatisfactorily working solely for the purpose of attaining comfort. By learning to remodel our consumerist culture and focus on reestablishing mood benefits that can be attained through nature, we can find that our habits of escaping into the comforts of technology are unnecessary and only serve to elevate unsatisfactory emotions. Although focused on consumerism, Ikerd's article heavily refers to the idea of "simple living" with a relationship of heavy interaction with nature as an unconventional solution to finding a way of regaining fulfilling genuine emotional experiences as biological beings without the need for escaping to technology--an idea ingrained in the narrative of *Project Lazarus*.

Liberati, Nicola. "Phenomenology, Pokémon Go, and Other Augmented Reality Games." *Human Studies* 41, no. 2 (July 2017): 211–32. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10746-017-9450-8>.

Liberati's journal article on the smartphone app game *Pokémon Go* examines the new form of digital/real life interactions of Augmented Reality within our escapist entertainment, emphasizing the contradictory nature of attempting to mesh both the digital environment and physical environment into one space to create a healthy relationship where the user can take a walk outside and interact with the world around them. However, this anti-sedentary goal fails to account for the user's experience of not being able to interact with both at once and inherently separating both as different realms. It predicts our future towards integrated reality digital games to attempt getting people to stay in touch with nature as a complicated journey. This is due to the conflicting nature of both as peoples' various emotional experiences of escaping into them can generate different responses of emotional fulfillment and genuineness in the world that they immersed themselves in. For *Project Lazarus*, this article provides an alternative opinion on natural living with the idea of digital escapism into technology as being able to generate

meaningful experiences for users, and creates many possibilities for how we can interact with both in one space to gain the mental and physical benefits of both.

Mandel, Emily St. John. *Station Eleven: a Novel*. Vintage Books, 2015.

Station Eleven is a post-apocalyptic fiction novel that centers around the story of a traveling group of survivors who perform Shakespeare plays in order to immortalize the best tales of humanity in raw mediums and experience the richness of life beyond simple physical survival. The story manages to be told from multiple characters' perspectives along different timelines before and after a virus wipes out most of human life, revealing the stark difference in livelihood and appreciation for life in the post-apocalyptic setting, while also presenting an appreciation for the ingenious inventions of the modern age that have helped us to live at ease, with no question of a possible societal or human demise. The story weaves together a unique atmosphere of genuineness, vulnerability and rich emotional experiences through each characters' realization of consequences and their very possible death, living every moment to the fullest through the music and the arts. One of its quotes, "Survival is insufficient" is an exemplary point that illuminates this message to show how we not only require food, shelter, clothing, and other basic needs for survival, but emotional and spiritual stimulation, social interactions and the heavy presence of nature in our lives to believe that we are alive. *Project Lazarus*, heavily inspired by this message, takes much of the simple lifestyles, religious paranoia over an apocalypse of technology, as well as physical interactivity with nature into the subtle designs of its project narrative.

Mindell, Earl. *The Happiness Effect: the Positive Benefits of Negative Ions*. Garden City Park, NY: Square One Publishers, 2016.

Mindell's book compiles the history, research and scientific studies conducted regarding the observable mood and health benefits of exposure to nature, providing concrete reasoning to the idea of utilizing nature as therapy and integrating it into our lifestyle to reach greater living

standards. It explains the nature of positive and negative ions, which when emitted by the energy and movement of various objects can have these influences on people, with negative ions stemming from storms, forests, waterfalls and oceans and positive ions from man-made innovations such as high-voltage networks, television sets, computers, smog, radiation and harmful chemicals. Mindell concludes that positive ions have been shown to have negative long term health and mood effects while even minimal exposure to negative ions can help relieve stress, anxiety, depression, and even minor health issues. Mindell's cumulative research provides an integral foundation for *Project Lazarus's* fundamental idea of envisioning a future where we can regain these health and mood benefits in a society that becomes increasingly more technological and as a result more full of positive ions that can hinder us.

South China Morning Post, "Chinese Online Star Li Ziqi Provides an Escape from Urban Life", Dec 23 2019, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6z_ia0L7Wc.

Online Chinese social media star Li Ziqi takes viewers through her daily life living sustainably in nature as she documents creating her own clothing, makeup, and food ingredients, emphasizing the act of returning to a natural lifestyle as beneficial to her overall peace and satisfaction in life after finding herself despondent working various jobs in the cities and attempting to attain a comfortable life of the consumerist dream. Her experience through this journey inspires millions worldwide as they marvel over the possibility of escaping from their modern lives into a simplistic way of living harmoniously in nature. Her tasks and personal experiences are integral towards shaping the emotional experiences of the characters in *Project Lazarus* as they learn to navigate living in nature independently from technology.

USC Game Innovation Lab, *Walden, a Game*, Windows/Mac, USC Games, 2017.

Walden, a Game is a first person video-game developed by Tracy Fullerton and USC Game Innovation Lab that simulates and explores the recorded experiences of Henry David Thoreau in his experiment of self-reliant living immersed in the wilderness during the industrial revolution. In this game, it prompts the user to complete tasks for survival such as creating equipment for

fishing, building a log cabin, and scavenging for food. The simple experience of learning to survive in nature while being surrounded by a wild and dangerous yet serene and quiet landscape brings players into an immersive experience of nature through their digital screens. The principle of experiencing nature through technology as we so often do in our frequent digital escapism inspires the ideas of juxtaposing both a tangible outdoor environment with a fabricated digital experience of nature within *Project Lazarus*, exposing our hypocritical relationship with interacting with technology and nature and seeking to study how we are emotionally influenced by both versions of nature.