

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

LIVIDITY IN PINK

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

BY

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My thesis project is a video game, a form chosen to address literary production the present. In my coursework, I have learned how Jonathan Swift's prolific writing managed to catch a moment in literary history by publishing his works in a printed and easily accessible form. I believe that we are currently in a new literary movement, in which the medium for literature is shifting to something more involved, interactive, personal, and able to encompass multimedia -- video games.

There has been much deliberation on whether or not video games are *art*, as is well encapsulated in MoMA's *Never Alone: Video Games and Other Interactive Design* exhibition, which I visited in New York. I intend for this work to prove, as many of the games in that exhibit did, that video games are not only art, but uniquely suited to independent storytelling. On the other hand, I attended the 2022 Video Game awards to observe the current video game landscape. I was disappointed but not surprised to see that the field is still mainly filled with large blockbuster AAA games, and that many indie games were not being recognized in the way in which they deserve. I hope to be a part of those who work for the landscape to be shaken, altered, and thrown toward meaningful narrative expression.

I wish to push the medium in terms of literary merit, and have included many dense pieces that I have written during my time at UCLA within the work. Interwoven between a fun and playable narrative, I have pieces I wrote for poetry and memoir workshops. This piece could not have been possible without the learning I have taken from UCLA. In English M107A I was exposed to Carmen Maria Machado, who influenced *Germ's Room* and the cleaving between the 'You' and 'I' voice. In English 191H I learned how to tell an interactive story, and was able to grow under the instruction of Professor Danny Snelson (who has been incredible throughout this project), and was exposed to what video games can mean in the UCLA Game Lab. In

Musicology M136, we discussed the gender politics of vocoders, which introduced Laurie Anderson, the inspiration for my main title song.

Following Anderson, as part of the game, I wrote and recorded a new track entitled “Computertron.” The song is meant to encapsulate the ideals and world within which the game opens; 80s futurism and calling out to technology in a way which you think it will understand. The vocoder we were able to use for my voice is an authentic one from the 80s, and the instruments are all mainly digital. There is a concluding segment to “Computertron,” in which time has passed and technology answers you. In this song, ‘Computertron’ herself is more human than you could have imagined, with acoustic instrumentation accompanying her. This is meant to tackle how AI has become much more human than any of us could have imagined, writing and drawing and occupying artist’s roles for a much lower cost.

There are many themes Lividity in Pink (LIP) tackles, but its central theme is dealing with ruins: the ruins of the mall, hoping for a brighter future, the American Dream, heteronormativity, and the ruins you leave yourself in when you find yourself depressed. All of these will be further delved into in the ongoing work I plan to continue developing with Lividity in Pink beyond the thesis.

In this way, while my work on this thesis project is complete, it is also a demonstration meant to launch a much larger project I will continue to work on the year after graduation. The style of the game is currently bound to the limitations of the platform I used to create it, RPG Maker. This month, RPG Maker UNITE (a collaboration between UNITY and RPG Maker) launched, with the ability to house better graphics and the ability to make more stylistic choices. I intend to have all the characters drawn, all the backgrounds collaged, the journal entries turned into hand-written and doodled pieces, add several more scenes (including the ending of the

game), and three small film projects. I already have a team of artists, musicians, directors, stylists, etc. that I am so grateful to have on board this project with me. This demo serves as a proof of concept, and an introduction into the world I have created, as well as representing the writing style of the project. I intend to keep much of the writing in the demo the same, only adding scenes and making minor edits for the final version. Soon after I submit my thesis, I will begin fundraising for the multimedia projects and to pay my visual artists. I have included some screenshots of scenes in the game as well as the character designs and art that has been created for LIP in this statement.

The reader is invited to follow these images into playing the game itself, included here with MAC and PC options. My hope is that by playing the game, the reader discovers how interactive narratives might enable new modes of storytelling beyond the printed page.



All of today's tasks will compound upon tomorrows
while you lie here.

















