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THE SUN, MOON, AND WORMHOLES: EXPLORING ECOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM IN *POKÉMON SUN* AND *POKÉMON MOON*

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Abstract
This study aims to explore ecological imperialism, mechanics as meaning, and ecological literacy in the 3DS video games *Pokémon Sun* (2016) and *Pokémon Moon* (2016), developed by Game Freak, which are set in a Hawaii-inspired fictional region. Recognizing the Pokémon franchise's worldwide appeal and the lack of postcolonial-ecocritical studies on Pokémon; the concepts of Ecological Imperialism and Entitlement by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, Mechanics as Meaning by Catherine Canning, and Ecological Literacy by David Orr; and the descriptive-analytical research design, this study explores the varying relationships between the environment and living beings by identifying the anthropocentric and biocentric actions of human characters, which stem from entitlement or lack thereof; the natural and artificial islands of the Alolan region, the former teeming with biodiversity and the latter with inhumane experiments and suffering; and the Pokémon characters as parts of either the ecology of Alola as native biota or the invasive Ultra Beasts as portmanteau biota. With the gameplay expressing the wonders of biodiversity and the influence of living beings on one another, as well as the narrative addressing issues of invasive species and entitlement to space and life, *Pokémon Sun* and *Pokémon Moon* can be considered ecologically literate games.

Keywords: ecological literacy, game studies, Pokémon, portmanteau biota, postcolonial ecocriticism

Introduction

In an interview published in *The Official Alola Region Pokédex & Postgame Adventure Guide*, Shigeru Ohmori, General Manager and director of *Pokémon Sun* and *Pokémon Moon* (PSM), discussed the conceptualization of PSM to celebrate the 20th year of the Pokémon franchise. Ohmori stated: "The Earth and the sun and the moon—they all pull on each other and exert an influence on one another, and it is within this relationship that life has developed. ... In these titles, I wanted to express the brilliance of life and the relationships between people and Pokémon as they influence one another" (Stratton, 2017, p. vi). Considering Ohmori's words, PSM highlights the intricate relationship between people and Pokémon, similar to how the Earth, sun, and moon influence each other. It also puts the player in the shoes of the protagonist who must save Pokémon and people, witnessing both the

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environment inspired by the Hawaiian Islands and the possible consequences of human selfishness against nature.

Ecological literacy has been explored through digital play, such as by Maulidah et al. (2021) and Muenz et al. (2023). However, despite the numerous studies on the specific ecocritical affinities of video games (Fjællingsdal & Klöckner, 2019; Ho et al., 2022; Bianchi, 2024; Pinder, 2024), there have been no postcolonial-ecocritical studies on Pokémon. While studies on Pokémon exist in postcolonialism (Kennedy, 2025), and in ecocriticism (Laato & Rauti, 2021; Rangel et al., 2024; Alcott & Maavara, 2025), there have been no studies specifically on the postcolonial-ecocriticality of PSM. This study thus utilizes textual and gameplay analysis to examine PSM, ultimately uncovering it as ecologically literate that challenges ecological imperialism.

Ecological imperialism

Postcolonial ecocriticism is a witness and investigation of "the complex interplay of social history with the natural world" (Vital, 2008, p. 90) through ecological imperialism, and how it includes land appropriation and introduction of invasive species (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015). Ecological imperialism is also apparent through entitlement, where "even the most well-intentioned missionaries, settlers, and administrators tended to conceive of themselves as conferring (or imposing) the gifts of civilization upon the benighted heathen with little or no interest in receiving his or her philosophical gifts in return" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 7). Applied to spaces, entitlement is the "[politicization] of space" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 138) and how land is claimed and profited from.

This study also uses anthropocentrism and biocentrism to classify selected characters. Anthropocentrism is the prioritization of human beings and the view of their superiority (Mishra, 2016) and thus their belief that they have the right to conquer and exploit other living beings. Anthropocentrism assumes the primacy of humans, who either sentimentalize or dominate the environment" (Mishra, 2016, p. 169). Biocentrism, on the other hand, is the explicit rejection of anthropocentrism and an ethical regard for non-humans (Attfield, 2009). He further explains that biocentrism values the belief that each living being must be considered for its own sake.

Native biota and portmanteau biota

This study uses the term native biota to refer to entities that are native to the Alolan region. Morton (2009) posits that imaginative evocation of environments can be expanded through terms such as geographia, topographia, chorographia, chronographia, hydrographia, anemographia, and dendrographia. In this study, these terms are used to refer to the entities living in these environments and their categorizations according to their biological typing, using terms such as hydrographic (Ledesma, 2024). Anemographic entities are those that are capable of flying and can be found in the sky; dendrographic entities are those living in greeneries or whose designs are inspired by greeneries; and hydrographic entities are those found in bodies of water.

The term biophilia was originally coined by German psychologist Erich Fromm, with the description being psychological attraction to everything alive. It was later defined by E.O. Wilson as the evolutionary link that connects human

beings with nature (Barbiero & Berto, 2021). Morton (2009) furthers this by presenting nature not as specific organisms, but as interconnected. This study takes from Morton's view on biophilia in defining biophilic entities, with these entities as beings of interconnected nature, which calls upon the interdependency of beings in the ecosystem (Soper, 1995).

In classifying the non-human entities in ecological imperialism, Crosby (2004) explored imperialism's biological component by citing how lands were colonized by European colonists through animals, plants, and pathogens, which he collectively refers to as "portmanteau biota" (p. 270). In this study, Crosby provides the concept of portmanteau biota, which is used to categorize Ultra Beasts and synthetic Pokémon that exist in Alola due to the Aether Foundation.

Ecological literacy

The above concepts, examined through narrative and gameplay, are used to prove PSM's ecological literacy. Orr (1992) advocated for an environmental education that is multidisciplinary through an Earth-centered education. This then leads to competence in systems thinking and a conducive understanding of the natural world, with people having active agency in creating a sustainable environment. The purpose of this kind of education is ecological literacy. Ecological literacy deals with comprehending connections in ecology. In this study, ecological literacy ties all analyses together, ultimately recognizing PSM as an ecologically literate text that portrays ecological imperialism through anthropocentrism and portmanteau biota through narrative and gameplay.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical design to scrutinize PSM's depiction of ecological imperialism, portmanteau and native biota, and embodiment of ecological literacy through analyzing selected characters, selected locations, and selected gameplay world elements and mechanics. This study combined textual analysis and gameplay analysis. To analyze gameplay, this study uses Mechanics as Meaning. Canning (2014) sought to delineate how video games can be representational through reading game mechanics as metaphor. She believed that video games can be a site of critical awareness through their potential to portray real-world systems; thus, gameplay could be analyzed for its meaning.

In this study, the game world and game mechanics are used to read PSM through a mechanics-as-metaphors approach that aims to delineate meanings derived from the gameplay. This is paired with textual analysis through close reading. This study employs the researcher's own gameplay as well as information from the book *Official Alola Region Pokédex & Postgame Adventure Guide*, with images in this study from Serebii, a website by Joe Merrick. Afterwards, the gathered data is divided into gameplay and narrative, with gameplay divided encompassing the selected game world elements and selected game mechanics, while the narrative encompasses the selected characters, selected locations, and overall story.

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Findings and Discussion

This study posits that the narrative and gameplay intertwined challenge ecological imperialism through its game world, mechanics, and portrayal of characters and locations. Specifically, this study finds the following:

Anthropocentric and biocentric human characters

Lusamine is the president of the Aether Foundation, an organization that, according to its employees, is for the sake of conservation. However, this is later revealed as a twisted goal when Lusamine's love is revealed to be controlling of those she deems under her when she puts Cosmog's life in danger for her own gain. Drawing upon the definition of entitlement as the imposition of "the gifts of civilization upon the benighted heathen" (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 7), Lusamine is an entitled human character who imposes rehabilitation because she sees Ultra Beasts as beneath her, while disregarding the ethics of the means by which she rehabilitates living beings. This is further underscored by the cryogenized Pokémon in her private collection. She becomes a vehicle for ecological imperialism through her introduction of Ultra Beasts as portmanteau biota in the Alolan islands.

Similarly, Faba, the Branch Chief of Aether Foundation, represents anthropocentrism. The scientific experiments done in Aether Paradise, particularly that of Type: Null, highlight Faba's anthropocentric goals and methods. His creation of an artificial Pokémon and his discardment of it when it cannot be domesticated is anthropocentric because of his prioritization of his goals rather than the state of living beings (Mishra, 2016)—including his artificial creation.

Guzma rejects traditions which Alola highly values, stating that the kahunas and trial captains should be thrown away in favor of the new. These traditions are closely linked to the guardian deities of Alola's islands; thus, his disregard for traditions is also a disregard for the guardian deities. Furthermore, Team Skull, the team of which he is a leader, is noted to steal Pokémon, such as stealing Yungoos from a little girl. Guzma's actions are anthropocentric due to his exploitation of living beings through stealing Pokémon. Furthermore, working with Lusamine enables her to carry out her own anthropocentric goals and methods of exploitation and control.

In contrast to anthropocentric characters in the narrative, there are biocentric characters. Lillie is a young girl whom the player sees in a cutscene at the beginning of the game where she runs away from employees of Aether Paradise to save her friend Cosmog. She grows her friendship with the player as she attempts to uncover the mystery of Cosmog's existence. Biocentrism is the rejection of anthropocentrism and the consideration of ethics for non-human beings (Attfield, 2009), with their flourishing as "intrinsically valuable" (Attfield, 2009, p. 98). Despite Lillie's incapability to battle and traverse the islands safely as she is not a Pokémon Trainer, her determination to help Cosmog is rooted in her seeing Cosmog's intrinsic value.

Another biocentric character is Nanu, the kahuna of Ula'ula Island and a police officer. Nanu's questioning of whether Pokémon truly enjoy the experience of being in Poké Balls is biocentric because he considers "moral attention or consideration for their own sake" (Attfield, 2009, p. 97). Although Pokémon in Poké Balls are the norm in the universe of PSM, with no one other than Nanu questioning it, Nanu presents an argument that warrants contemplation on the state

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of Pokémon. His character thus implies a constant search for a biocentric relationship where both people and Pokémon are respected and taken care of.

Meanwhile, Ilima is the sole trial captain of Melemele Island. According to a policeman that the player may talk to while wandering around Hau'oli City, Ilima and his partner Pokémon Smeargle work together to maintain the gates and grass where Pokémon stay in the city. This illustrates Ilima's responsibility as a Trial Captain who has to act for the flourishing of living beings, including Pokémon, for their own sake, as emphasized in biocentrism (Attfield, 2009).

Native biota and portmanteau biota

Selected Pokémon classified under native biota and portmanteau biota are chosen based on their introduction to the Pokémon universe being in PSM and their typing, making them fit to represent the entities for each category specifically for the Alolan region. Tapu Koko, Tapu Lele, Tapu Bulu, and Tapu Fini are the guardian deities of Alola, and they are the ones who choose the kahuna of the island. Their capricious attitudes mirror the uncertainty and unpredictability of nature itself—while sustaining life for living beings, natural disasters and harmful substances within nature itself make the relationship between human beings and nature neither entirely positive nor entirely negative. These guardian deities thus are biophilic entities as beings of interconnected nature (Morton 247), mirroring "nature's force and beauty" (Ledesma, 2024, p. 332).

For anemographic entities, Pikipek's—and eventually Trumbeak and Toucannon's—Pokédex entries detail how it survives through food storage and nesting and attacks through its most notable body part, its beak. Pikipek's wings make the anemographic categorization more apparent. The differing variants of Oricorio based on what they consume reflect how nature and the environment change living beings themselves in real life. For instance, "the flamingos acquire the carotenoid pigments that tinge their plumage from their diets, and are also able of metabolizing [sic] those pigments into others. Habitat characteristics may have affected which types of carotenoids are more commonly used by every species" (Amat & Rendón, 2017, pp. 77). Similar to the flamingo, Oricorio thus embodies the close relationship between appearance, consumption, and environment. Cutiefly and Ribombee are also anemographic entities, with Ribombee's puffs consumed as supplements. Keeping in mind the harmony between people and Pokémon in Alola's natural islands, consuming goods from living beings such as Ribombee without killing them, while ensuring that they are free and happy, becomes a give-and-take—respect and care are given by human beings in Alola, and Ribombee is able to provide pollen puffs that function as supplements.

For dendrographic entities, Exeggcute evolves into Alolan Exeggutor in PSM. The Alolan Exeggutor, as a Grass-type Pokémon, is a dendrographic entity because it is classified as parts of plants and trees, which is in Morton's dendrographic biosemiotic mode. Notably, the Alolan Exeggutor is physically different from its Kantonian counterpart, with the Sun Pokédex entry stating that Alola is its ideal environment. This highlights how the environment is significant in the growth and development of living beings. Similarly, Fomantis and Lurantis are dendrographic entities because of their resemblance to plants and flowers, further supported by Cutiefly—the bee-like Pokémon—being attracted to Fomantis. Bounsweet—and later on, Steenee and Tsareena—is a dendrographic

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entity, identified through Morton's dendrographic biosemiotic mode due to Bounsweet's close resemblance to fruits of plants and trees as well as its native habitat being Alola's Lush Jungle (Stratton, 2017). Its Pokédex entries as Bounsweet detail how it is a prey of its fellow Pokémon, Toucannon, while also highlighting how its sweat can be consumed by human beings. Its relationship with other Pokémon—and in turn its place in ecological harmony of the environment—is detailed in Steenee's Pokédex Moon entry where it attracts other Pokémon with its appearance and aroma, cultivating healthy and friendly relations with other Pokémon.

For hydrographic entities, Wishiwashi resembles fishes that group into schools, such as the Mexican tetra and *Clupeidae* (Larsson, 2024). When fishes school, they relay information to each other and maximize the chances of their survival, as well as learn from older members of the school in terms of foraging and navigation techniques and predator avoidance strategies (Olaniyi, 2023). This is reflected in Wishiwashi School Form being numerous, with Wishiwashi working together to ward off predators. On the other hand, Mareanie and Toxapex are hydrographic entities as they are "found crawling on beaches and seafloors" (Stratton, 2017, p. 85). As part of Alola's ecology, they are a predator of Corsola, thus highlighting how Pokémon in Alola's environment are not necessarily always friendly to each other, but are also capable of mimicking real-life food chains. Pyukumuku is also a hydrographic entity because its habitat is "shallow seas, such as areas near a beach" (Stratton, 2017, p. 138). It most resembles the real-life sea cucumber due to its appearance and its ability to eviscerate its organs. Holothurians, most commonly known as sea cucumbers, expel their internal organs and regenerate them in at least 7 days (Weigel, 2020). Similarly, Pyukumuku ejects its internal organs, but Pyukumuku is not solely prey; it is capable of being a predator by engulfing its prey in its internal organs.

Portmanteau biota are animals, plants, and pathogens brought by European settlers (Crosby, 2004). In PSM's context, portmanteau biota are Ultra Beasts brought to Alola through the wormholes opened by Aether Foundation. As Cosmog and its evolution line come from another world, it is not native to Alola and is instead portmanteau biota. Nonetheless, Cosmog's intervention in the story presents a positive alternative to what is commonly associated with the destruction of portmanteau biota. It presents a possibility of it blending with Alola's ecological harmony through its friendship with Lillie and the player. As portmanteau biota, it is also capable of being used for the anthropocentric goals of human beings, such as previously stated in the Aether Report where experimentations were done on Cosmog. On the other hand, Type: Null's appearance and title as a Beast Killer point towards Aether Foundation's entitlement, creating life for the purpose of subjugating Ultra Beasts, which are harmful, and thus the foundation is seen as well-intentioned (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015), but ultimately abandoning Type: Null when it no longer serves them. This further underscores how portmanteau biota, which are brought by the Aether Foundation to Alola and are also constructed by the Aether Foundation through experiments, become subject to the whims of the Foundation and its anthropocentric views. Type: Null then evolves into Silvally with "high friendship" (Stratton, 2017, p. 141). Silvally symbolizes how biocentricity and kind actions positively impact the development of a living being, echoing the narrative's emphasis on the relationships between people, Pokémon,

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and the environment. Lastly, Nihilego is considered a portmanteau biota because of how it hails from another world as an Ultra Beast, and how it is effectively summoned by Lusamine through using Cosmog to open the Ultra Wormhole. Nihilego is also invasive because of how it negatively affects the living beings of its surroundings, noted in its Sun entry. In the story, this is reflected in Nihilego merging with Lusamine and attacking the player. Lusamine having to be saved implies Nihilego is taking over Lusamine's mind and body, invading its host literally.

Ecologically literate game world

The game world in Mechanics as Meaning is concerned with the setting and the role of the player (Canning, 2014). The player is in the role of a protagonist whose mother and self have just moved to Alola from Kanto. Applying Mechanics as Meaning, the player is a foreigner in Alola, which narratively places them in the possibility of being biocentric by respecting the people and Pokémon of Alola, or anthropocentric by teaming up with Aether Foundation. As the player progresses through the games, the player remains on Lillie and Cosmog's side. The player's role is thus defined as a protagonist who values the holistic well-being of people and Pokémon.

Non-playable characters consist of both plot-important characters and other characters who, while not directly contributing to the plot, color the world of PSM. Applying Canning's Mechanics as Meaning, non-playable characters act as vehicles for the player to learn from different perspectives. PSM's clear framing of good versus bad highlights its stance of biocentrism as seen in the player-protagonist and the deuteragonist, as opposed to the anthropocentric actions depicted through the antagonists.

In terms of the Pokémon themselves, at the beginning of the narrative, the player chooses the starter Pokémon, and the starter Pokémon has to choose the player back. Biocentricity is emphasized through the player and the Pokémon seeing eye to eye, with the Pokémon having the right of choice. This is aligned with biocentrism, which champions consideration for all living beings for their own sake (Attfield, 2009). Furthermore, the Pokémon discussed can be encountered in their habitats as well as throughout the storyline, highlighting their connection to their environment.

The variety of the Alolan islands in PSM, specifically Melemele Island, Akala Island, Ula'ula Island, and Poni Island with their differing habitats, illustrates Pokémon's biodiversity and portrayal of habitats. Specifically, the Alolan islands having biophilic, anemographic, dendrographic, and hydrographic entities, which can be encountered by the player, implies PSM as a tool for learning the relationship between the entities and their habitats. For instance, encountering hydrographic entities such as Wishiwashi in water-rich environments instructs the player about the environment in which hydrographic entities thrive and interact. Applying Canning's Mechanics of Meaning, the entities being seen in specific environments point towards the necessity of habitat and environmental preferences of entities. Furthermore, the locations also exhibit unique mechanics depending on the Weather and In-Game Time.

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Figure 1. The Alolan Islands, from Joe Merrick's website, Serebii (Serebii.net, n.d.-b)

The weather in PSM is seen in Battles, where the Weather conditions affect how strong a Pokémon and its moves can be. As a metaphor, the Weather mechanic reflects how the environment can directly affect the lives and actions of living beings within a specific area. As weather is scientifically dependent on changes in air pressure in the atmosphere (Wooten, 2011; Sriram et al., 2025), and certain Pokémon become stronger depending on the Weather, this reinforces Pokémon as ecocritical faces of the world who represent various sectors of nature through the biosemiotic modes. Meanwhile, the In-Game Time in PSM is also reflected in the gameplay. When the time the player has set in the 3DS is morning, the time is also morning in Sun, while it is night in Moon. When the 3DS' time is set to nighttime, the time in Sun is also night, while in Moon, it is morning. Applying Canning's Mechanics as Meaning and seeing the In-Game Time as a metaphor, this reflects how the living beings within an environment are affected by time and temperature, and further reinforces Pokémon as living beings who have their own natures and behaviors that adapt to their surroundings. If the player wishes to catch an Alolan Rattata, for instance, they must wait until it becomes night in-game. This instructs the player how day and night cycles affect the visibility and internal body clock of living beings, highlighting the connection of natural phenomena to the ecology.

In Aether Paradise's laboratories, however, anthropocentric greed is exercised under the guise of humanitarianism in the Aether Foundation's public goal of protecting Pokémon. The laboratory records detail experimentation and abandonment of portmanteau biota, which informs the player of the actions of the antagonists and the anthropocentrism of their actions. Thus, through exploration of Aether Paradise, the player learns of anthropocentrism in the narrative and how living beings become portmanteau biota: through bringing them from another location or world entirely, in Cosmog and Nihilego's case, or through synthetic creation in Type: Null's case. Stewardship as comprehended in ecological literacy (Orr, 1992) becomes a facade for the antagonists to further their own goals.

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Ecologically literate game mechanics

Battles are necessary to move the plot forward, as exploring the map is locked behind progress in the narrative. Through trials, the player is able to progress through the islands by securing Trial Badges, which are awarded after the player successfully completes Island Trials. It is also noted that Tapu Koko, at the beginning of the narrative, is pleased with Battles, thus adding a dimension of Battles as a way of communicating between one being and another. Single Battles are the most commonly known battles. It consists of either the player and their Pokémon battling against a human non-playable character with their own Pokémon, or the player and their Pokémon battling against a Wild Pokémon. As a metaphor, this highlights how Battles—which can be interpreted as communication—require the cooperation of more than simply the player and their Pokémon, but also communication between fellow human beings and Pokémon that are not part of their team. Notably, PSM introduces a new Battle style through SOS Battles. SOS Battles occur when, during a battle of the player and their Pokémon against a Wild Pokémon, the Wild Pokémon calls for a companion to help them fight. This is noted to be a natural phenomenon and limited to Alola. As a metaphor, this means that the relationship between Wild Pokémons in Alola is strong and built on teamwork and collaboration. PSM thus recognizes the relationship between living forms that are apart from humans and portrays them with camaraderie in mind.



Figure 2. An SOS Battle, from Joe Merrick's website, Serebii (Serebii.net, n.d.-a)

Z-Moves are special moves in a Pokémon Battle that the player can have their Pokémon use if the Pokémon is holding the corresponding Z-Crystal. The special power mechanic introduced in PSM is also linked to friendship with Pokémon. Applying Canning's Mechanics of Meaning, Z-Moves are a physical manifestation of biocentricity. It highlights the friendship between the player and the Pokémon and the player's recognition of the Pokémon's own will, and this being framed as a power-up points towards PSM placing great significance on friendship and connecting with other living beings.

Pokémon Refresh is a PSM-only feature where the player can care for their Pokémon anytime and is a specifically presented feature after battling. The mechanics of Status Conditions emphasize Pokémon as living beings that can be affected by the environment and by each other. While Status Conditions can be removed through healing at the Pokémon Center, the player is also presented on the

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screen with the Pokémon Refresh tab ready to be clicked. Reading this mechanic as a metaphor, Pokémon Refresh represents the bond between the player and Pokémon, fostered through care. Presenting Pokémon Refresh immediately after battling implies the urgency of care for what the player's Pokémon may feel and what Status Conditions they may have sustained because of the Battle. The existence of Pokémon Refresh as a mechanic thus reinforces PSM's message of biocentricity and encourages the player to care for their Pokémon through not only bringing them to the Pokémon Center to heal, but to heal their wounds through first aid during Pokémon Refresh and feed them beans. This builds their relationship further and highlights how the player contributes to the flourishing of other living beings, a key point in biocentrism (Attfield, 2009).

Finally, Poké Ride allows for the player to traverse the islands as they please, with certain Pokémon in Poké Ride opening new paths that cannot be accessed through walking alone as the player. Exploration, thus, is possible through Pokémon. Applying Canning's Mechanics as Meaning, Poké Ride represents how the bond of the player and the Pokémon allows both of them to move forward and learn more of the world through each other. The world is explored specifically through the collaboration between the player and the Pokémon, and this opens the player to appreciating the islands and, eventually, saving Lusamine and Cosmog in the narrative. Poké Ride, then, is a metaphor for the teamwork between human beings and other living beings towards a deeper understanding of the environment as well as in saving it. As the player uses Poké Ride, they actively participate in this teamwork and collaborate with other living beings to explore the islands.

Challenging ecological imperialism

The narrative and gameplay are intertwined in PSM through the story and setting being slowly revealed as the player goes through the islands, and the game world and its mechanics are also slowly unlocked—such as Poké Ride—by progressing the story and meeting different non-playable characters. Together, the narrative and gameplay challenge ecological imperialism by establishing biocentricity as the standard of interaction between humans, non-humans, and the environment, committed to a flourishing of all that considers each being for their sake (Attfield, 2009).

Rather than a promotion of land appropriation that aligns with ecological imperialism (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015), as seen in Aether Paradise and the laboratories that the player is able to traverse, PSM highlights the anthropocentric entitlement that permeates the artificial island. This is contrasted with the vibrant natural islands that the player explores in the game world and whose significance is further highlighted in the story, with biocentric characters fighting against invasive species with guardian deities to protect the islands and their inhabitants from destruction. Particularly, scenes in the narrative of kahunas and guardian deities working together invoke harmony that directly counters the dispensability and permanent service of non-humans to humans in ecological imperialism (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015); rather than guardian deities working under human beings, guardian deities pick the kahunas that oversee the islands and work with them towards peace.

This harmony is essential to the structure of the game world, where the setting puts the player as a person who values biocentricity, thus helping Alola and being

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against the Aether Foundation's schemes alongside other biocentric characters. Similar to the kahuna and the guardian deities in the narrative, the player fights against Aether Foundation's Lusamine, Faba, and Guzma. PSM also allows the player to witness how the environment affects its native biota through the weather and in-game time, showing that the environment that portmanteau biota are capable of destroying has its own life that non-humans inhabit and actively participate in.

The native biota which can be seen in the natural islands also echo Hawaii's biodiversity, reflecting Ohmori's ecocritical vision of portraying Alola as a region with varied ecologies and environments based on Hawaii. Furthermore, Hawaii's postcolonial context is reflected through the ecological imperialism that permeates PSM's narrative and gameplay; similar to Hawaii's numerous invasive species (D'Antonio et al., 2016), PSM's portmanteau biota negatively impact Alola. PSM challenges ecological imperialism by portraying invasive species as harmful.

On the other hand, the game mechanics intertwine with the story, characters, and setting by exploring how they can be interacted with by the player, thus directly involving the player in biocentric actions of caring for Pokémon while working together with them towards saving Cosmog from Lusamine. Together, they challenge ecological imperialism's facet of anthropocentrism as justified (Plumwood, 2003, qtd. in Huggan & Tiffin, 2015); PSM presents a world where, instead of entitlement, humans and non-humans can co-exist and help each other towards a better future.

Conclusion

PSM challenges ecological imperialism in both its narrative and gameplay by portraying a positive relationship between humans and non-humans, and how this kind of relationship triumphs over the anthropocentric and entitled way that humans interact with non-humans by seeing them as disposable and in service to human beings. This biocentric positioning of PSM mirrors Ohmori's goal of revealing Hawaii's biodiversity through Alola's native biota and natural islands. Noting Hawaii's history of colonization, PSM also opposes ecological imperialism by revealing the entitlement and selfishness of Aether Foundation's unethical experiments and appropriation of space through Aether Paradise. With the player and other characters against Aether Foundation, PSM positions itself against ecological imperialism because its narrative and gameplay pursue the vision of humans and non-humans in harmony with the environment, free of one being supplanting the other.

Generative AI Statement

The author used Grammarly for grammar and plagiarism checking. Results from Grammarly were edited by the author.

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