

Spring 3-12-2024

Athalea: fear and hate

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ATHALEA: FEAR AND HATE

BY

SANTIAGO POSADA-JARAMILLO

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF DESIGN, JARVIS COLLEGE OF
COMPUTING AND DIGITAL MEDIA OF DEPAUL UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS IN GAME DESIGN

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

2024

DePaul University
College of Computing and Digital Media

MFA Thesis Verification Form

This thesis has been read and approved by the thesis committee below according to the requirements of the School of Design graduate program and DePaul University.

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ABSTRACT

Athalea: Fear and Hate is a single-player 2D role-playing video game (RPG) for PC using pixel art and a minimalistic aesthetic. Through conversations, environmental storytelling, and the main character's own thoughts, the game explores, through a critical lens, fascist rhetoric and the way that fascists use power in order to help the player to be better equipped to properly understand how fascism operates. Different from traditional portrayals in media that tend to use an easily identifiable set of symbols and historical references, *Athalea: Fear and Hate* exposes fascism in a different context with the goal of making the core of the ideology easier to spot even with the absence of its usual signifiers. In *Athalea: Fear and Hate*, you play as Apolonia, a veteran from the war that drove her country into economic hardship and political turmoil. Through her eyes, the player will witness the desperation that drives people either to help each other in order to endure the crisis, or exploit divisions and fear with the goal of gaining power and eliminating political enemies. Can Apolonia and her friends find a way to keep their community together to resist the rising authoritarianism and bigotry in their beloved neighborhood?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Giving thanks is difficult for me, not because I'm not grateful or because I don't see the impact others had on me and my projects, but because words are too limited when trying to express the complexities of an experience.

Lien Tran, you always helped me remember the steps I needed to take when I felt lost.

Jess King, you always guided me to avoid leaving anyone behind and to help carve a better world.

Mike DeAnda, you always gave me unexpected tips that made things just click in place.

Andre, your music gave life to the game's world, and our conversations helped me understand my own characters better.

Ma, tu habilidad para sacar esperanzas de la nada hace que ocurran milagros.

Brother, your refusal to let dreams die while making sure to keep your feet on the ground is an inspiration.

Pa, tu confianza frente a la desesperanza me mantuvo caminando hacia delante.

Fer, tu constante optimismo ante la adversidad me recuerda siempre ser resiliente.

Nati, your natural unconventionality makes the world make a little bit more sense.

Neith, your company helped me wake up even when I felt little motivation to do it.

Victoria, for always being excited about updates to this project and your refusal to let important things become dust.

Matt, for understanding the importance of having a cup of coffee that lies beyond the beverage.

Nick, for your appreciation of everyone's uniqueness and not being afraid to feel with passion.

Tyler, for seeking the unconventional humor hidden behind both the simple and the complex.

Robin, for your unbridled creativity and stubbornness against the coldness of the world.

JC, for your inspiring obsession with never letting a perspective unexplored.

Esraa, for your ability to listen and refusal to let the world ruin your joy.

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CHAPTER 1

Description of Game

Athalea: Fear and Hate is a single-player 2D role-playing video game (RPG) for PC. In order to move the story forward the player, through Apolonia (the main character), must interact with non-playing characters and the environment. Making choices is a key aspect to let the player explore the story and learn about the game world in their own way.

The game uses minimalistic aesthetics and an isometric view to provide an experience where conversations and environmental storytelling are the main way to interact with the world. The music and sound effects in the game help to communicate the state of the world: a desperate post-war country where people are trying to find a glimpse of hope that helps them overcome their day-to-day hardships.

Athalea: Fear and Hate is played using a keyboard, for movement and interacting with non-player characters and objects, and a computer mouse, in order to make choices in and move through conversations.

The player will play as Apolonia, a veteran of the infamous *Red War*, during which Athalea, her nation and the setting for the game, suffered a terrible defeat that left a deep wound in its economy, unity and pride. After returning from the war that she fought in defense of her people, she is faced with orders from her superiors in the army directed towards silencing their dissenting voices. After this heart ripping situation, she decides to remain loyal to her ideals, and refuses the orders to suppress dissent. Together with her childhood friends, Mariana and Alejandra, she will try to make sure that her community stays together and resists the rising strength of authoritarianism and bigotry.

The setting of the game is a diesel-punk fantasy world where various types of magic exist. Athalea, the country where the story takes place, is a militaristic nation with strong nationalism within its population. After the war, poverty, immigration, sexual and gender diversity and democracy became controversial topics that divided the population across the country. The story of this game will focus on Apolonia's neighborhood in Emberglow (Apolonia's capital), and the problems that its community is facing.

The game explores conversations around socio-political issues through the lens of anti-fascist thought and community organizing, and the goal of the game is making it easier for the player to understand fascist rhetoric and actions.

It's important to mention that my thesis is only going to cover a small portion (a vertical slice) of the much more extensive game experience which I've outlined for future development.

CHAPTER 2

Statement of Intent

The crimes of fascist 20th century governments are widely known. This made it extremely difficult for fascists to openly access power again, as many democracies around the world approved laws that banned them from organizing and coalitions (like the United Nations) were formed to impede their progress towards power (Bokat-lindell, 2020). Sadly, this didn't extinguish the interest of some to use fascism to access and wield power, but it was evident that they (fascists) needed to sneak their ideas and methods into other movements in order to avoid immediate popular condemnation and political death (Burley, 2022). As a benefit to them, fascist tactics are very good at exploiting the economic desperation and frustration with democracy of populations going through hardship under liberal democracies (Danskin, 2018). This is because fascism can harvest the fear and anguish of the population and turn it into hate against their political enemies or anyone that may stand in the way of their goals; thus giving desperate people in confusing situations simple answers and clear enemies (no matter how detached from reality it all is).

Nowadays, many people think that, because there is a consensus around the idea that fascism is bad, our societies and governments are immune to fascism, but nothing can be further from the truth. The average person doesn't really understand fascism and usually equate it to a set of symbols or images, like the swastika, concentration camps or eugenics, but the problem is that most of these are not intrinsic to fascism. So, fascism with a different mask can easily slip (or, better said, has easily slipped) into many democracies around the world (Bokat-lindell, 2020; Szalai, 2020).

In order to get this experience to people, a dialogue driven role-playing game (RPG) was chosen as a way of letting the players that are attracted to games are narrative-driven and where choices matter immerse themselves in the story by making their own choices and within a potentially familiar genre that will help them feel motivated to explore further (Arjoranta, 2022). The conflict-filled setting from *This War of Mine* (2014), and the character development of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* (2015) were important inspirations for this particular video game. The capacity of RPGs to allow players to make decisions from the perspective of their character (Apolonia) is the perfect tool to approach a subject and a world such as the one presented in the game.

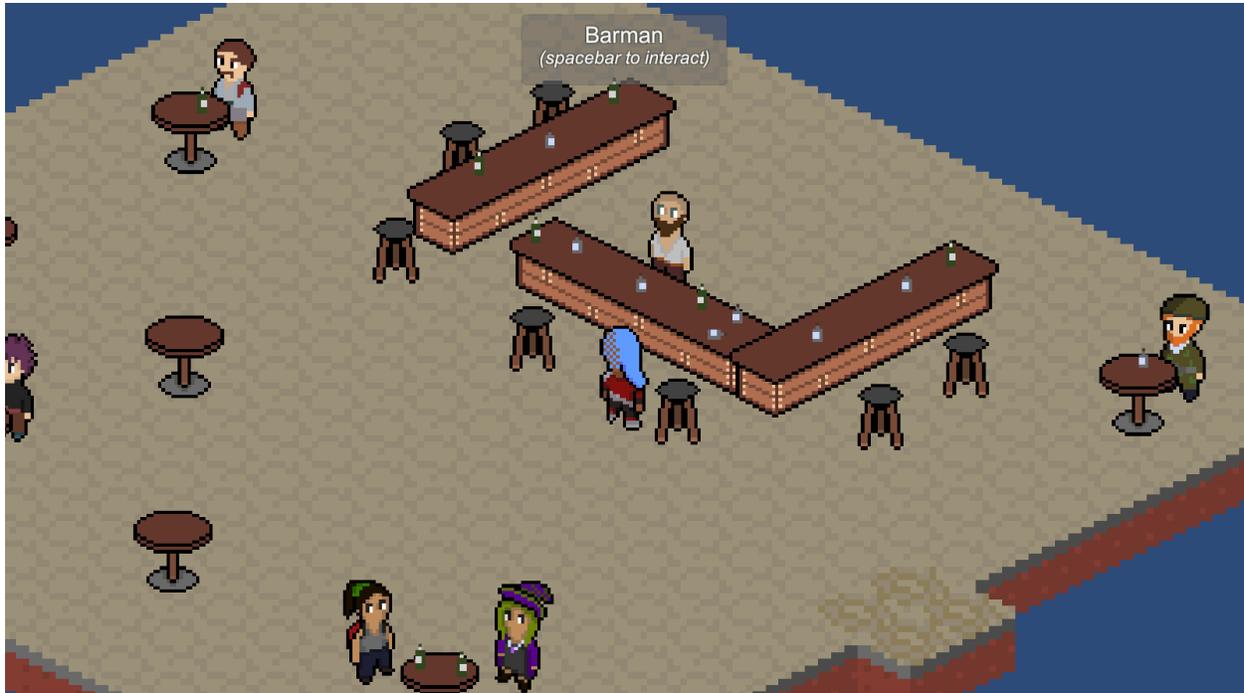
With this in mind, the primary audience of the game would be people that are not necessarily familiarized with fascism and its history, so it can have a deeper impact. Activists

and educators may also be interested in the educational capacity for the game and present it to targeted populations that may have a need to familiarize themselves better with the dangers of fascism. These groups may be contacted directly to assess their interest in making use of the game.

My goal is that, through conversations, and in a universe different from our own (with its own history and politics), the core of fascist rhetoric and actions is explored so players may have an easier time understanding it and relating it to the horrors that it tends to inevitably devolve into.

CHAPTER 3

Link to the Game and Inputs



Download link:

<https://ophio134.itch.io/athalea>

Controls for keyboard & mouse:

Movement: Arrow Keys or WASD

Dialogue control: Left Mouse Click

APPENDIX 1

Essential elements of fascism depicted

Fascism is a complicated movement to understand adequately, as it often is reduced to its examples in history. It is sometimes hard to understand fascism as a movement outside of Mussolini's Italy or Hitler's Germany (Bokat-lindell, 2020). How did fascism operate before reaching the point where concentration camps were created, or even before fascists were able to get enough political power to control a country? Or what would fascism look like in a different universe, without concentration camps or the Second World War?

I operate from the basis that it is not useful to think of fascism in absolute terms. What I mean by this is that I'm not going to try to define if someone is or is not a fascist or if a government is or is not fascist: instead I will point out perspectives, arguments, and actions that are fascist, no matter where they originate from. That said, I am going to say things like "fascists tend to do this or that" as it helps to create a more concrete image of the tactics and beliefs common in fascist movements. Just keep in mind that reality is more nuanced, and a person can use some of these tactics and not be an open or full fascist (and still be problematic and dangerous).

I will list and explain some of the core elements that I depict as part of fascism (Bokat-lindell, 2020; Danskin, 2018; Burley, 2022, Hett, 2018):

- **Us-vs-Them hierarchy:** Fascism requires this world view as a prerequisite. There is a clear line defining groups of people as enemies or other (them) from groups of people that deserve power and happiness (us). These groups are almost usually defined based on either intrinsic characteristics (race, culture, nationality, etc.) or by their willingness to oppose the fascists (left leaning, cultural groups with different ways of organizing, religious groups that oppose them on moral grounds, etc.). These groups are usually depicted in simplistic ways (straw man fallacy) and those that defend them or propose more nuanced depictions are attacked or mocked as part of them. Although this line that separates 'us' from 'them' is clear, it's not unmovable. As groups are expelled or exterminated, new enemies are created by making them up or transferring them from the 'us' to the 'them'.
- **Authoritarianism:** Fascist will participate in democratic governments and institutions but always push towards dissolving it if they are in power. This goes in line with the hierarchy that fascism favors: they conclude that those that are not part of 'us', don't deserve to be heard. Also, fascism usually operates in a constant state of paranoia where the only way to survive extermination from their enemies is to use the power of the state

to oppress and even exterminate those that it deems as 'them'. And that is easier to do for an authoritarian and militaristic government.

- **Legendary past:** Fascists have different ways of justifying their use of power and the supposed righteousness of their cause. An important one is that they tend to link their movement or themselves with historic symbols and struggles. In order to fit their narrative, these historical references tend to be modified to their convenience or, in some cases, completely made up.
- **Use of liberal tolerance:** Fascists use their opponents' beliefs in liberal values like tolerance and protection of free speech in order to find spaces to spread their ideas to wider populations, even though they don't tend to respect those values themselves.
- **Conspiracy theories:** Conspiracy theories help fascist spread fear and anger across the population, helping to create the rifts that they exploit to use power. A divided population that distrusts those that are different is a perfect setting for their rise to power.

APPENDIX 2

Essential elements of anti-fascist resistance depicted (Burley, 2022)

- **Strong social network:** A strong community that responds to the problems of its members is better at avoiding paranoia and isolation. Strong communities whose members know each other will be better protected against plans to divide them or make them fear other communities.
- **Avoid strong hierarchies:** Although not all hierarchies are palatable for fascists, they are a lot easier for fascists to infiltrate or co-opting them than they are with more horizontal collectives. Also, this prevents all the problems connected to the misuse of power by individuals who have too much of it.
- **Help those in need:** Fascists thrive when people are desperate, and they tend to lose favor and power when the needs of the community are met. When people thrive and feel safe, they are more resilient to paranoia or believing in imaginary enemies. So, helping the community is not only the right thing to do, but also a strategic antifascist tactic.
- **Don't let them gain ground:** Fascists in communities tend to be the most literal example of a wolf in sheep's clothing. They will play the victim card as long as the community lets them (or until they get enough power when the use of the card disappears). They will try to get positions in community spaces in order to take control of them or disrupt their functioning. No letting them play this card forces them to take off their masks.

APPENDIX 3

Lore

Different parts of the lore help as context for the events that shape the reality of the world. Here are some topics and facts of the lore that are not explicit in the game so far, but are key to understand how the lives of the citizens of Athalea are like.

Magic:

In the universe of *Athalea: Fear and Hate* some humans have the capacity to do magic. The users of magic generally specialize in a specific *domain* or type of magic. These *domains* control different parts of reality or in different ways. Three control different types of matter (Aero, Flow, Geo), one controls energy (Ion), and two control the forces around life and entropy (Bio, Necro).

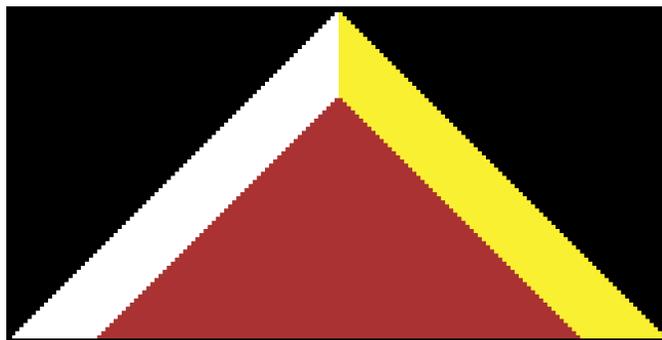
Magic domains	What they control	Examples (organized from easier to harder to control)
Aero	Gasses	Air, vapor, smoke.
Flow	Liquids	Water, oil, extremely hot lava.
Geo	Solids	Rocks, metals, trees.
Ion	Energy	Fire, electricity, plasma.
Bio	Life	Healing, changing body's processes (hormone balance), helping growth.
Necro	Death - Entropy	Worsen diseases/wounds, promote autoimmune responses, disintegrate a living being.

In the game's world, some people are born with magic, others can only use magic after learning to do so in an institution, and the rest are unable to use magic. Historically, this has caused divides and tensions. Both the magic system and the social consequences of its existence are somewhat present in the vertical slice of the game, but they will not be fleshed out given the project's time limitations and general scope.

Magic, in general, involves a certain expertise in the intricacies of some state of matter (Aero for gasses, Flow for liquids, Geo for solids), of entropy (Bio for anti-entropy, Necro for entropy), or of energy (Ion).

Political context and history:

In the country of Athalea, there is a vast history that isn't going to be fully explored in-game, but that its consequences are going to be apparent for the players. These are some of the facts about Athalea:



- Athalea was a monarchy a long time ago.
- As a country, much of its wealth is related to its gold and silver mines (represented by yellow and white in the flag).
- It has also been a military power since its founding and has been part of many smaller conflicts before the Red War. The black in **Athalea's Flag** the flag represents darkness or the country's enemies, and the red represents the bloodshed in those conflicts.
- There are four main political parties in Athalean democracy, each representing a different political position: Golden Eagles (Fascists), Crown Guard (monarchist conservatives), Morning Ravens (Social-Democrats), and Red Sun (Communists).
- Emberglow is Athalea's capital city. The was built in order to be easily defended, while being a good stop between the mountains in the west (where the majority of the mines are), and the Vosconian Sea (where all of Athalean port cities are).
- Emberglow's name comes from the name of the original estate that the land was part of, before it became a town. The estate was named after a mythical family of Ion users: the Emberglow family. Some of the richest families in the city claim to be descendants of the Emberglows.
- The Red War changed Athalea and its neighbors in major ways. Tensions had been building for decades, mostly due to conflicting claims over territories and economic wars. The war engulfed the region after a war of two smaller countries to the west became the perfect excuse for many bigger countries to restart their past claims for territories of their neighbors. Athalea was one of these bigger nations.
- Although Athalea saw many strategic victories at the start of the war, it wasn't ready to sustain a long stalemate that lasted for years on most of its fronts. Being cut from her

allies both by land and by sea, Athalea's economy plummeted and both the army and the civilian population faced starvation. Despite this reality, fearing losing support for the war effort, most of the media (aligned with the Crown Guard, the ruling party at the moment) hid the grim reality from the population. During most of the war, this gave most of the civilians in Athalea, and even most of the army too, hope to keep going despite the cost.

- In the final year of the war, with a tired and hungry population, the Morning Ravens saw huge electoral victories while running on a campaign that promised to "end the war and ask for reparations from our defeated enemies." To almost everyone's surprise in Athalea, they had been mostly losing the war, with few fronts actually getting territorial gains in the past few years (Apolonia's front, to the south, was one of these). The Ravens not only had to break the news to a whole country that was only resisting thanks to its unfounded hopes, but they also had to surrender to those enemy countries that they promised to get reparations from. This humiliation shattered the country's pride and caused the Ravens to lose most of the political terrain they had gained when elections came, as both the Crown Guard and the Golden Eagles promoted the idea that it was the Raven's fault that they had lost the war.
- After the war, the payment of reparations and territory lost with the surrender caused the economic situation of the country to remain dire. On top of this, Athalea had received many refugees and other immigrants from neighboring countries during the war (especially from its allies). This was partly caused by the false propaganda that claimed that they were winning the war, in addition to how getting more cheap labor worked to many industry and mine owners' advantage. Most of the population in cities faced poverty and hunger.

APPENDIX 4

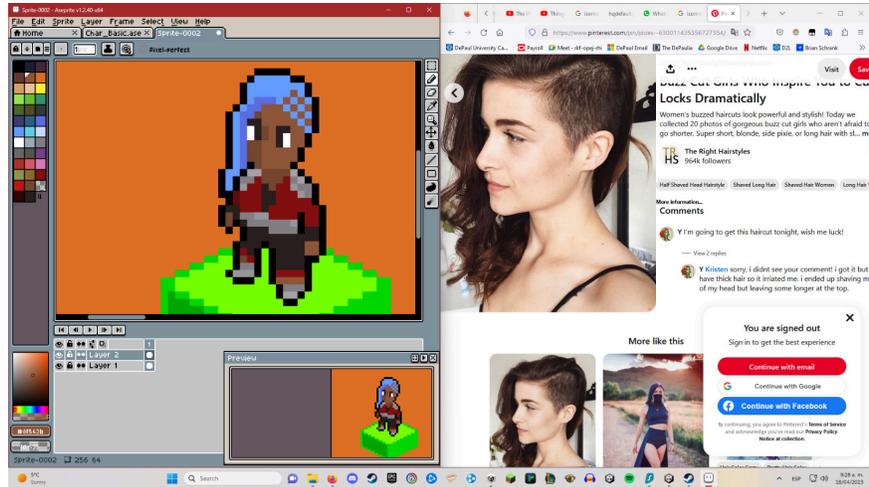
Development and Design

The main idea of this being a game that talked about fascism was always there, but the form changed during the development. Character design was very important from the start, and it helped me get inspiration for their personalities and backgrounds.

Apolonia was the seed from where the whole universe of *Athalea: Fear and Hate* came from. As a veteran, a skilled Aero user, and a queer character, her perspective on the events of the game help the player explore the reality of this post-war Emberglow neighborhood from both a position of privilege and the experience of someone that has faced discrimination.

She was born with the capacity

to use Aero Magic as his Grandmother. Her father died in combat as part of a naval battle in the Vosconian Sea at the start of the Red War, and was a Flow user since he was born.



Character design: Apolonia

Mariana is, in a way, the spicier of the group. A younger sister to Alejandra, she has witnessed how divisive rhetoric and oppressive hierarchies cause great harm around her. From the discrimination her family faced as they were perceived by others as foreigners, to the treatment her sister endured since she started transitioning, she has seen first hand how the people she loves are shunned just for existing. This enrages her, and she is not scared of using any means necessary to avoid the bigots to harm her community. Also, she has an internal struggle of her own. There have been times when using “she/her” doesn’t feel right, and she feels far away from being as comfortable being perceived as a woman as her sister does. Although she accepts non-binary people and has no problem with respecting those that are still questioning their identity, she is not as kind to herself, so she still uses “she/her” as her pronouns and identifies as a woman. The matter is further complicated by the fact that, to her, her femininity has a strong, symbolic link with her memories of her deceased mother. Although Mariana wasn’t born with the capacity to use magic, she started training to become a Geo user thanks to a friend in the neighborhood, and she is partially hiding how good she has become in a short amount of time.



Character design: Mariana (Mari, from the series Vida, was a very strong inspiration both visually and personality-wise)

Alejandra could be interpreted as the mother figure of the group. She feels responsible for the safety of her community and, contrary to her sister, sees violence as the last option. She was born with the capacity to use Bio Magic, but, as she had no access to specialized magic education, she wasn't able to develop her powers until her teens when she started teaching herself thanks to books and her own intuition. Most people think, because of this, that she wasn't born with this power, and she doesn't correct them. Her powers Helped with her transition, and she became a healer among her community. She is very subtle with her powers, preferring to use teas and plants as conduits for her power (like eating a herb she gave you in order to heal your cold) instead of laying her hands on people as most Bio healers in Athalea do.



Character design: Alejandra

([@the.entangled.fae](https://www.instagram.com/the_entangled_fae) on Instagram and her hats were key in Alejandra's visual design)

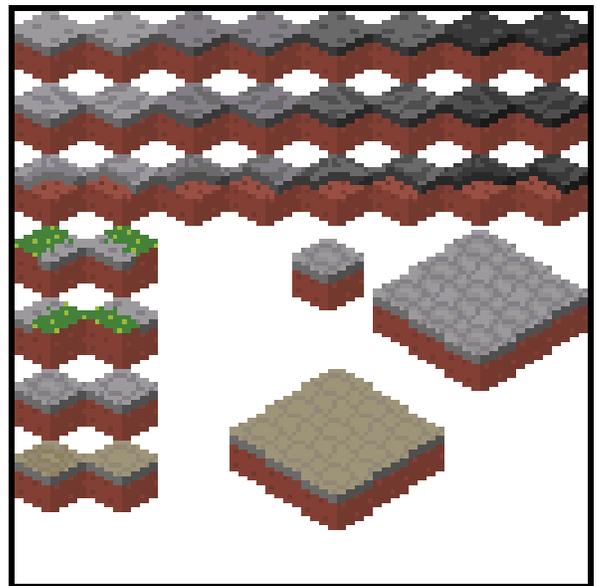
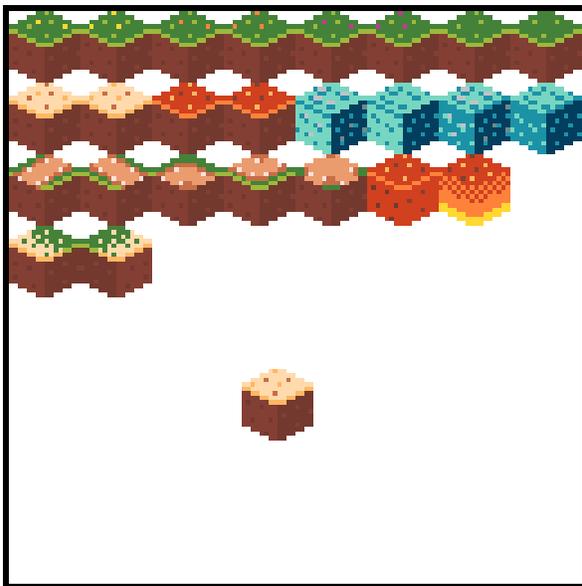


Screenshot from an early stage of the game before the decision to change the setting was made

At the start, the setting for the story was still Athalea, but most of it was going to take place in rural areas of the country and centered around revolutionary efforts to overthrow a fascist government.

When I decided to make the change to an urban setting and centering around civil resistance, I expressed my ideas in the following way:

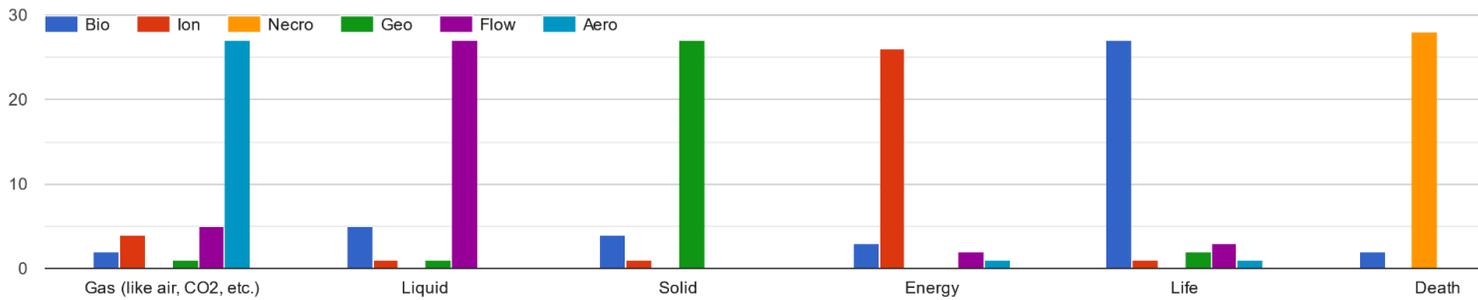
Justification: As I am trying to analyze the rhetoric of fascism, conversation and visible actions are the best way to deliver that. War, although a high stake situation that can easily portray the worst consequences of fascism, it isn't the best context for rhetoric to be explored. Bullets and bombs do the talking in war, and nuanced positions are more easily discarded as either conceding to the enemy or as useless thought experiments. A civil setting, where there are still resistance efforts, would be a better context to explore the rhetoric and the perspectives of fascism, while being able to show a diverse cast of characters with their own beliefs and experiences.



Tiles: The first tiles were designed for a rural environment (left), while the new ones were inspired by more urban settings (right).

The idea of the setting being a universe where magic exists was always part of the idea. The magic system was developed parallel to the story, and it was defined later in the process. A questionnaire was made and filled out by the students of the class Playtesting (GAM 312) with Professor DeAnda. The results showed that the names of the Magic Domains seemed intuitive to the majority of the participants.

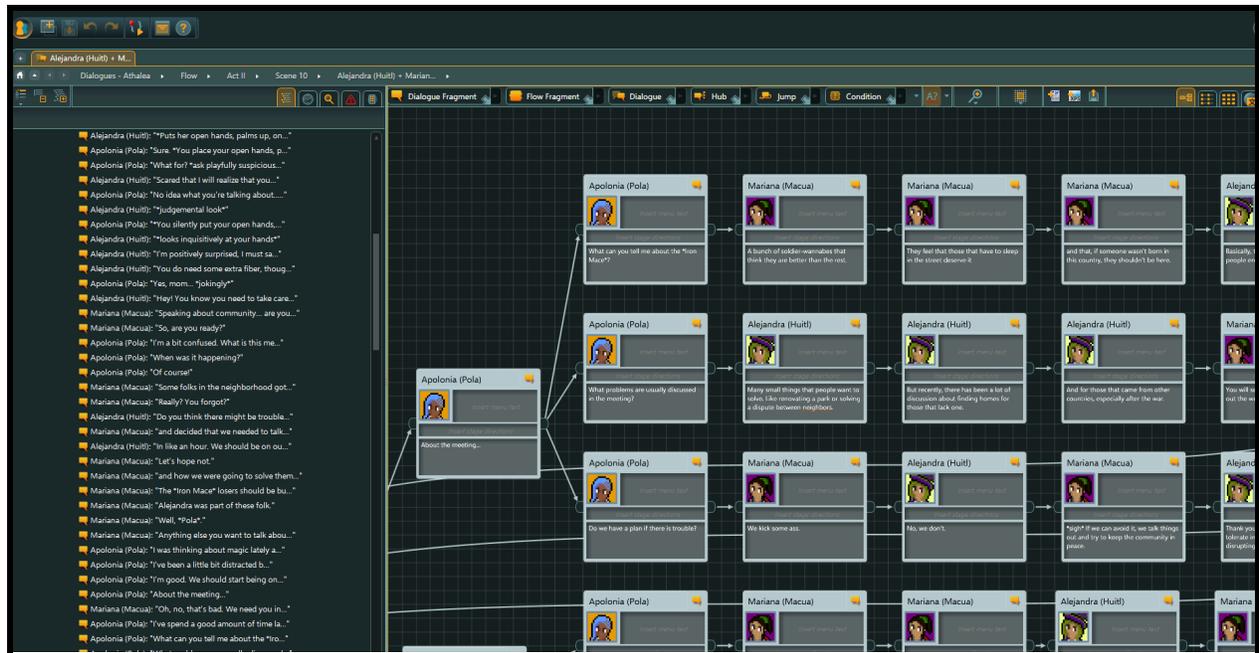
Which name (columns) describes the concept (rows) better?



Names for the Magic Domains: A questionnaire was made to make sure the names of the magic domains were intuitive. (Mostly answered by students of Game Design in Mike DeAnda’s class.)

The dialogues were probably one of the most time-consuming and complex parts of the game development. Many edits had to be made after gathering feedback and making decisions while in the late stages of development (many of these decisions were focused on making the story less confusing for players).

The software [articy:draft](#) is a visual database to keep track of storylines, characters, and variables in one place, and was used to organize the dialogue trees and characters in a way that was easy to understand and edit during the development process.



Dialogues in *articy:draft*: Dialogues are the main way the story is presented to the player in *Athalea: Fear and Hate*.

Scene	Playable?	Location	Brief Description of Events	Time of Day/Weather
9	0	N/A	Monologue: People are desperate, Gran Arconte Scylax and The Golden Eagle party offer a solution that causes people to turn on each other, we need a solution that brings people together. Start in the resistance movement.	N/A
10	1	Bar	Meeting with friends. Amir, Mariana, Alejandra. Talk about them personally, and magic. Get to know them. Interacting with each one, starts a new group conversation.	Noon

Scene	Mood	What can the player see?	Characters in Scene	Interactables	Apolonia's Goal - What has she gained?	Design Goal
9		Dialogues	Zekha	N/A	Finish talking with Zekha.	Better understanding on the political context
10	Calm, Happy	Industrial/Urban Bar, working class, old & young people, bartender	Mariana (Macau), Alejandra (Huitl).	Bartender, couple	Talk with Mariana and Alejandra about the next steps.	Better understanding on the characters in a more personal level. Understand their personalities and what moves them.

Game Design Macro: Example of the organization for the scenes that appear in the game. Showing two scenes. (Divided to improve legibility)

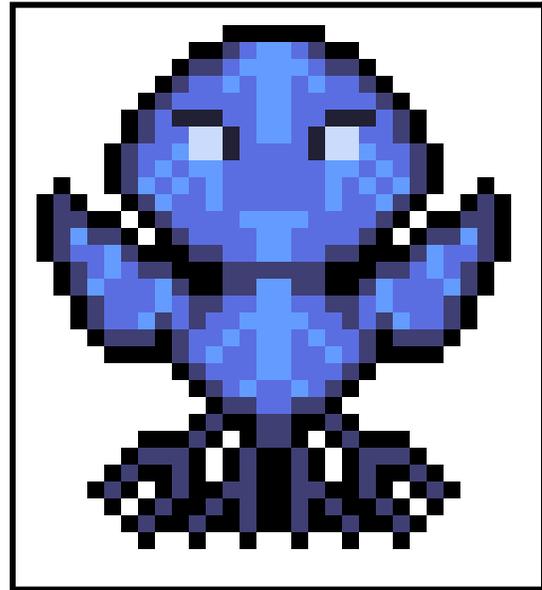
For this thesis, I was only able to show a small portion of the game, a vertical slice. I wanted to focus on a section that showed the way in which the game was going to be played, the main characters that the player would encounter and some samples of the context and the topics the game was going to address.

There were many narrative decisions that helped shape this game into a proper storytelling device for this particular story.

Zekha is a wind spirit related to Aero Magic that talks telepathically with Apolonia. In game, this is represented by her appearing on an island with Zekha, immobile, in the middle. He helped Apolonia with developing her Aero skills and helps her when she is troubled by her reality. Zekha is also a curious being, interested in human affairs while never getting involved with it, helps as a confidant and strange paternal figure to Apolonia.

Zekha, as a character, serves many purposes. He helps to elicit a meta-conversation where the world events are explained to the player without the need of a cutscene or a narrator. With Zekha, the player will also be able to understand Apolonia's perspectives on the world around her, Isolated from all the variables that talking with another human brings (like consequences of saying something controversial or having to keep in mind the other person's role to avoid being inappropriate). This point is especially important as I wanted to avoid potentially boring monologues. This wind spirit also hints at a depth to the world that it's not easy to show in a vertical slice, trying to make the player wonder if there are other spirits related to other magic domains and, if they do, are they talking to other humans that we see in the story? Is Zekha talking to just Apolonia, or she is just one of many? Does Zekha have a physical form, and can he influence the world with his powers if he wanted to?

Another narrative decision that was important for the feeling of the world was trying to create conversations that felt **natural**. I want the characters to be perceived as believable human beings with their own lives, personalities, interests, intentions, pasts, strengths, weaknesses, perspectives and contradictions. They are not perfect human beings, nor are they representations of concepts; I want the player to feel them as real humans through their unique design and way of expressing themselves.



Zekha

REFERENCES/INSPIRATION

Annotated Bibliography

- Books:

- Arendt, H. (2006). *Eichmann in Jerusalem - a report on the banality of evil*. Penguin Books.

Hannah Arendt, born in Hanover, Germany, 1906, was a Jewish philosopher and Holocaust survivor that wrote books analyzing the Holocaust, totalitarianism and the concept of evil.

This book is a report on the trail of the German Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. But one of the most essential parts of the book, and also what helped to create so much controversy around its publication, was how she analyzes Eichmann as a person. He is depicted as a boring, shallow and even stupid man. To many, this portrayed him as less culpable of the horrendous crimes he helped to perpetrate, but in truth it shows that evil actions in the world don't necessarily come from evil geniuses, but from detached and pragmatic human beings in inhumane systems. This text will be the core inspiration of how the story of the game is written and how many of the characters in the game are designed.

- Arjoranta, J. (2022). How are Games Interpreted? Hermeneutics for Game Studies. *Game Studies*, 22(3).
- Burley, S. (Ed.). (2022). *No pasarán: Antifascist dispatches from a world in crisis*. AK PRESS.
- Hett, B. C. (2018). *The death of democracy: Hitlers rise to power and the downfall of the Weimar Republic*. Henry Holt.

Benjamin Carter Hett, born in Rochester, New York, is a U.S. historian and professor at the Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York that has written books and articles about the first half of the 20th Century in German history.

In this book, Hett examines the events that preceded the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany, taking great care to avoid simple explanations. The book uses many different primary sources of the time to explore how many non-Nazi figures helped to pave the way for fascism, and how everything that happened was only possible thanks to systemic problems in Weimar Germany. This text is the main source in my project for the historic factors that made fascism reach power, so I plan to make many parallels from some of the historical events depicted in the book in the game.

- **Articles or chapters:**

- Bokan-Lindell, S. (2020, July 30). *Fascism: A concern*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/opinion/fascism-us.html?searchResultPosition=5>

- Bornberg, L. (2022). The Storming of the Capitol and the Attack on the Reichstag Building. In *The U.S. Capitol and the German Reichstag Building under Attack: A Qualitative Study on Visual Framing and Photojournalism in U.S. and German Online News Media* (pp. 10–44). [Master's thesis, Ohio University]. OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ohiou1648273681711076

Luisa Sophia Bornberg has a Bachelor's degree in Communication and Media Science at the Leipzig University, and is (as of 2022) a graduate student in the Master of Science in Journalism (Ohio University), and Master of Arts in Global Mass Communication (Leipzig University).

In this thesis, Bornberg examines both the records and the media reaction at the time for the Reichstag Fire and for the January 6 United States Capitol attack. This examination is focused on, as the abstract states, “differences and similarities in photojournalistic characteristics as well as visual frames associated with the two incidents” (Bornberg, 2022). This visual approach is what I'm most interested in, as it will give me the tools to replicate the strong images that impacted the perspectives of the people at the time, so I can try to replicate their strength and symbolic power in the events of the game.

- Hett, B. C. (2015). “This story is about something fundamental”: Nazi criminals, history, memory, and the Reichstag Fire. *Central European History*, 48(2), 199–224. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0008938915000345>

Benjamin Carter Hett, born in Rochester, New York, is a U.S. historian and professor at the Hunter College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York that has written books and articles about the first half of the 20th Century in German history.

This article analyzes the evidence surrounding the Reichstag Fire Event, the name given to the arson attack that ended up burning the German parliament (Reichstag) in Berlin, 27 February 1933. Reichstag Fire was used by the right-wing government of Paul von Hindenburg as a justification for the persecution of communists, socialist, and anarchists (his political adversaries), and the restrictions to social liberties that were implemented in the months to come. These reforms are widely accepted as the ones that gave the last blows to German democracy and left the country vulnerable for the Nazi takeover in the next months. This analysis shows that the previously accepted theory of whom the arsonist is based on poorly backed-up testimonies from pro-Nazi sources at the time and, given new evidence arose since, more fitting theories are proposed by Hett. This whole article gives an enlightening insight into the way fascists use divisive events to fit their narrative and find new justifications for actions that may previously have been widely unpopular, which will be useful to replicate in the game's events.

- Szalai, J. (2020, June 10). *The debate over the word “fascism” takes a new turn*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/10/books/fascism-debate-donald-trump.html>

- **Others:**

- Danskin, I. [Innuendo Studios]. (2018, November 29). *Endnote 2: White Fascism* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Luu1Beb8ng>

Ian Danskin is a YouTuber and video essayist from the US that produces Innuendo Studios, a YouTube channel with videos mainly about socio-political analysis and media review.

The video series *The Alt-Right Playbook* explores the rhetoric and actions of the *Alt-Right* and other right-leaning groups in the current political climate of the US and in internet discourse.

- Sandifer, E., & Graham, J. (2017). No Law for the Lions and Many Laws for the Oxen is Liberty: A subjective Calculation of the Value of the Austrian School. In *Neoreaction a basilisk: Essays on and around the alt right* (pp. 235–302). Essay, Eruditorum Press.

Elizabeth Sandifer is a writer and founder of Eruditorum Press. She is a comic writer, and has published various books and essays about politics and philosophy. Jack Graham is a writer and podcaster, usually analyzing neoliberalism and white supremacy, and their proponents.

This essay analyzes and criticizes the main patterns of thought inspired by the Austrian School and the logical conclusions, from a Marxist-Humanist perspective. As Nazi Germany is not the only example we have of fascism, there is a need to identify the other ways it has replicated and how its rhetoric is still being used nowadays. An analysis of the Austrian School gives us a good example of a pattern of thought that is either highly susceptible to fascism, or it ends up becoming fascist rhetoric in the end. This will give me tools to include more contemporary red flags of fascist rhetoric in the game.

- Saracho, T., Turtletaub, M., Saraf, P., Schwartz, R., Langhoff, S. (Executive Producers). (2018–2020). *Vida* [TV series]. Big Beach; Chingona Productions.

Tanya Saracho is a Mexican-American screenwriter and actress who is particularly known for the “Latina gaze” she uses in her creations. She developed and was the showrunner of *Vida*.

Vida follows the lives of the Hernandez sisters after returning to their childhood neighborhood (Boyle Heights) in Los Angeles. The characters of this series were a big inspiration to help me think of mine in a more human way; with defects, contradictions and hopes.

- **Games:**

- *This War of Mine* [Microsoft Windows]. (2014). 11 bit studios.

A survival video game inspired by the Siege of Sarajevo. You play as a group of civilians that try to survive in the cruel reality of a non-combatant in an urban war zone. This game was an inspiration to keep in mind that not only combatants are in a war, and there are strong stories from civilian survivors in every conflict.

- *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* [Microsoft Windows]. (2015). CD Projekt.

An action role-playing game based on the book series of the same name, *The Witcher 3* manages to show kindness and warmth in a cruel and cold world, in a way that seems both realistic and responsible. Their character exposition and the importance of the choices and actions of the players on how the story unfolds were an important inspiration.