Storytelling for IM Assessment

NAME: Domenico Robert Urso

ITS USERNAME: tgz521

STUDENT NUMBER: 303042245

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Analysing how Allegretto explores the concept of what a Protagonist can be in Games?

The definition of the protagonist is: 'the central character in a story… their wants, desires, flaws and actions drive the plot.'[1] When a protagonist is well-woven into a story's structure, commonly Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, for example, the story and character come into fruition.[2] George Lucas, creator of Star Wars, had a copy of The Hero with a Thousand Faces on his desk during production, the book by Campbell.[3] Luke Skywalker's story sees him leave home with a mentor to go on a journey to settle a conflict he wants no part in, a classic take on the Hero's Journey.[4] Since Tolkien, this structure has flourished. Now, times are changing. September C Fawkes *(2024)* describes the ensemble cast and its impact on structure as 'feeling daunting, especially when most writing advice is for stories that feature one, or maybe two, lead characters.'[5] An ensemble cast may feature a range of protagonists and is an increasingly popular writing structure, dependent on many interlinking plotlines. This coincides with the increasing popularity of non-linear structure. In which events occur out of chronological order. 'Story is the order of events; narrative is the order of telling,' describes literary critic, Gerard Genette *(2016)*.[6] These 'temporal settings' within a discourse allow for narrative comprehension, but how could narratology be altered if these temporal settings became writing devices?

To Be Hero X (2025), published by Li Haoling, is a unique example of temporal settings acting as dramatic tension in non-linear narratology and a main inspiration behind Allegretto. To Be Hero X follows an ensemble cast of 10 characters each spanning 2-4 episodes.[7] Between episodes 16-19, you see a key event from various perspectives, each revealing new context which adds to the 'temporal setting.' By the end of this arc, we see these characters converge, setting the stage for a finale which chronologically leads directly into the first episode. Alfred Hitchcock's Bomb Theory discusses that, 'there is a distinct difference between 'suspense,' and 'surprise,' and yet many pictures continually confuse the two.'[8] *Yakuza 0 (2015)* 'benefits from focusing on the plights of Kiryu and Majima… whose paths ultimately converge in the end,' says IGN.[9] The RPG focuses on these two protagonists, neither lesser than the other with each chapter switching between them. Despite their journeys feeling separate, in a twist it's revealed they've been helping each other. Tom & Marco (2022) suggested, 'players seek eudaimonic experiences in addition to hedonistic when playing videogames.'[10] Meaning, games do not simply supply entertainment, but lessons, emotional attachment, and personal growth, due to their interactivity. This begged the question, what if the To Be Hero X's structure could be applied to the gaming medium, and digested by the player similarly to Yakuza 0 with a focus on suspense, rather than surprise. Except, with a higher essence of mystery, personal investigation and interpretation seen in *Galatea, by Emily Short (2000), Elden Ring (2022) and Blue Prince (2025)*. Galatea only exists within its characters, described as 'a single conversation with a single character,'[11] with Blue Prince being reliant on player deduction and Elden Ring offering bite-sized lore throughout.

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[1] https://www.backstage.com/magazine/article/protagonist-definition-examples-77536/
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In her book *'Digital Storytelling (2014),' Carolyn* Miller suggests, 'characters pull us into the story… we empathise with our heroes. Thanks to characters… we connect with the story on a deep emotional level.'[12] Yet, author David Straker on his website, *Changing Minds,* presents 18 hero types.[13] [14] This creates a contradiction. If a character creates a connection, and the connection develops a deep story, then if the player does not identify with a character, will they enjoy the story? Richard Vincent discusses this issue concerning his company's hit character, Mia.[15] We can see the truth in this, as a Reddit survey from 429 responses conducted in 2022, discovered 86.7% of God of War players were men, with 22.2% being millennials.[16] As Kratos may resonate with men in their 20s-40s the most. Meanwhile, a game such as Overwatch, with a 50% female character roster, features an estimated 26% female player count *(Teknos Study 2020).*[17] Overwatch *(2016)* from *Blizzard* has a character roster with a range of dynamic playable heroes, each with unique backstories, abilities, appearances, and dialogue. 'Game designers don't tell stories; they design worlds and sculpt spaces which have the potential to embody stories,' says *Jenkins (2004).*[18] So in a game like Overwatch, the game designers supply players with a choice of characters, whom they choose alters their personal experience for the game. Unlike games like God of War (2018), where if you don't resonate with the protagonist, the story will be lost on you. A rich landscape of characters not only makes the world feel alive but also improves longevity and the game's surrounding community presence due to 'harmonious and obsessive passion,' obvious as these worlds become so inhabited during the pandemic *(Formosa et al 2022).*[19] [20]

Allegretto deploys ludological consonance with its narrative. Being a turn-based, role-playing game *(RPG)* allows for the gameplay to revolve around the ensemble protagonists even during combat encounters. Whilst sprinkling in a lot of synchronic user-interface features and objective-based dialogue such as via the inclusion of the dozen Bards. All this working in tandem makes Allegretto feel like a world not designed for games, but one that could only exist within the video gaming medium. Allegretto will introduce you to two new characters for the story to centre around. Build up your emotional investment in the pair and their narrative in a 3-act structure *(Aristotle 300BC)*, typically ending in a sense of suspense. This concept is seen in Yakuza 0 *(2015)* and To Be Hero X *(2025)* to keep the viewer/player returning even if they don't resonate with the current protagonist, as they remain to see the return of their personal favourites.[21] The cycle then repeats in the next chapter with another pair of Curator and Artifex Mortus. Within each chapter, there's a repeating emotional linearity, within which the player grows attached to a pair, and will often miss them in the following chapter as they learn to love the next pair. Thomas Grip *(2010)* suggests, 'there are limits… and certain characteristics might make it impossible for a player to feel a real connection.'[22] In 'Elden Ring: Subverting Heroic Nostalgia,' by Oliver Rendle and Amber Pasternack *(2025)*, they analyse how the tarnished (*protagonist of Elden Ring (2022))* ends with the protagonists' intentions possibly being

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[12] https://r4.vlebooks.com/Reader?ean=9780203425923 (Page 89)
[13] https://r4.vlebooks.com/Reader?ean=9780203425923# (Page 96)
[14] https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/19087998-changing-minds
[15] https://r4.vlebooks.com/Reader?ean=9780203425923# (Page 93)
[16] https://www.reddit.com/r/GodofWar/comments/116l9bv/god_of_war_player_survey_results/
[17] https://www.teknosassociates.com/the-rise-of-female-gamers-esports-underappreciated-fans/#:~:text=Female%20viewership%20share%20of%20esports,they%20were%20a%20decade%20ago
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[18] https://paas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/09.-Henry-Jenkins-Game-Design-As-Narrative-Architecture.pdf
[19] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0747563222002448
[20] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563222000541
[21] https://www.arcstudiopro.com/blog/three-act-structure-in-screenwriting
[22] https://frictionalgames.com/2010-11-how-the-player-becomes-the-protagonist/

misaligned with the players.[23] Yet this disconnect and ludological dissonance doesn't reflect the players' emotional connection, as seen via its victory at the 2022 Game Awards.[24]

In Allegretto, the first protagonist of Chapter 1, Michelle Evans, is a refined, quiet 22-year-old female musician dealing with an intense sense of grief for her deceased best friend and love interest. With Michelle's character introduction, we hit 3 niches: grief, queer identity, and the pressure of succeeding. Not every player will relate to Michelle, but those who do may see more of themselves compared to other 'self-insert' archetypes for games with a sole protagonist. In The Last of Us Part II, following the first game's protagonist's death, the player character switches to Ellie, and later new character Abi. Naughty Dog's game became controversial amongst fans as Abi is built up as the antagonist during Ellie's arc, but in truth, this was great character writing achieved through interactivity.[25] Similarly Allegretto has the player move on from Michelle and Aria, two characters they learn to love and see develop into accepting their grief and grasping their reason for competing in the Ostende, to the others. They'll control Kuro Tanaka and Euphenberg Citlali in Chapter 2, then William Chraner and D'Angelo De Pontifex in Chapter 3 and Rocky Rage in Chapter 4. All of them are competing against each other in the Ostende, with their own ambitions. This is how the discourse around Allegretto comes to fruition, and a sense of ludological dissonance and discomfort arises in the player. Due to them wanting many characters to achieve their goals, but not all of them can.

Therefore, when the party is assembled and the true antagonist is revealed, questions begin to be answered, and the player will have one aligned intention in line with the characters' goal of defeating Scribe. The player tackles this goal with an ensemble of characters they know well and deeply understand the mechanics and playstyles off. *Richard Rouse and Tom Abernathy* state in *GDC 2014* that 'Game stories are not structure.'[26] Allegretto is an answer to such a statement, a product of the direction that storytelling in games has been heading over the last decade. Game stories don't need a one-size-fits-all structure; they don't need one protagonist; there can be many journeys. Ludology as a concept opens so many doors when paired with narratology. The creative decisions for games are entirely those of the designers, developers, and the players, there is no status quo.

[23] https://gamestudies.org/2501/articles/rendle_pasternack
[24] https://thegameawards.com/rewind/year-2022
[25] https://www.denofgeek.com/games/the-last-of-us-part-2-controversy-explained/#:~:text=The%20Last%20of%20Us%20Part%202%20Ending%20Controversy,conclusion%20of%20the%20previous%20title.
[26] https://gdcvault.com/play/1020535/Death-to-the-Three-Act

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26. https://gdcvault.com/play/1020535/Death-to-the-Three-Act 17/12/25

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Appendix

Story Description

Title: Allegretto

Medium: Videogame

What is Allegretto?

Allegretto is a narrative-focused turn-based role-playing game which takes place over the course of 6 individual chapters, as well as an epilogue. Allegretto, being a French pianist term for the process of playing at a 'moderate to increasing pace,' represents how the story explores the themes associated with life moving faster than we initially expect or ending quicker than we humans imagine. Allegretto is a story of sacrifice, guilt, grief, and regret, which explores a wide range of diverse characters from across the eras who all devoted their lives to some creative form of artistry whether audio-based or via visuals. Allegretto's themes come into play as the main plot explores what happens when these individuals' lives end before they were able to achieve their creative dreams, yet now in the present, they are given a second chance.

The World

'The Zone,' described in a neurological study from Drexel University's creativity lab as a 'state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter,'[27] It is a real scientific concept which is often referenced by creatives, from artists to musicians, from amateur to professional. Allegretto takes this concept and applies a supernatural twist to it, turning 'The Zone' into an ethereal realm beyond our own, known as 'Et Zonam.' And when a creative person reaches 'the zone,' their soul has temporarily seen a glimpse of 'Et Zonam,' and in doing so, their soul has transformed into being one chosen by Scribe. Scribe being the supposed God and Overseer of the holy father's first elements, the first creations from within the 7 days, which being visuals and sound. When one's soul has passed temporarily into 'Et Zonam,' they gain the power to become an Artifex Mortus when they die. A Mortus is a soul who exists without consciousness between the mortal realm and Scribe's realm of Et Zonam. Eventually, at some point across time, if a living mortal creates something or has an impact in any way so powerful that it's artistry can be sensed from Et Zonam, then a subconscious Mortus soul that has a strong personal and emotional connection to the piece will come down to the mortal realm and engage in an interrogation or unlocking type interaction with the mortal. It is important to understand that the Mortus doesn't have to have known the mortal during life, and the Mortal doesn't have to be aware of who the Mortus is for the connection to form. It's a connection based on art, not on logic.

A Curator and their Mortus

Following this interrogative scenario, if successful, in which the mortal tries to understand the Mortus and their dreams, as well as vice versa. Then the Artifex Mortus will rematerialize in the mortal realm with no concept of time having passed, giving the mortal the goal of introducing them to the present era and ensuring they fit within it and are well-guided, hence the mortal takes on the role of being the 'Curator.' When enough pairs of Curator and Mortus exist in the mortal realm, then Scribe declares the rules and starting dates of his Grand Ostende, the Ostende in Allegretto being the 21st as it is usually a per century event.

[27] https://drexel.edu/news/archive/2024/March/New-Neuroimaging-Study-Reveals-How-the-Brain-Achieves-a-Creative-Flow-State

How does the Ostende work?

Scribe's Grand Ostende is, in a way a narrative-focused battle royale featuring a range of different challenges or objectives that the pairs of Curator and Mortus must undergo and win to pass to the next rounds. The rounds all take place simultaneously as long as enough available contenders have arrived at the following objective, which means the contest is also in some ways a race but also score based. Score is obtained and gathered through one's performance in any given task, such as one of the contests may be a showcase type scenario akin to those seen in Pokémon Ruby and Saphire or the various public performances Cloud Strife happens to reluctantly do in Final Fantasy 7. Not only does this create interesting space for new mechanics such as quick time events mixed with the turn-based move selection, but such also as like an evolution of real-time reactions in turn-based gameplay seen in Clair Obscur: Expedition 33 by Sandfall Interactive. But also, to help balance a performance with the player's powers, but also introduces ways of exploring character personalities and the dynamics between various Mortus and their Curators. Making the contest not only score-based, but time-focused, is due to Scribe's belief in balancing quality and quantity within his creations.

However, with such a complex method of progressing the Ostende with a range of different scoring methods, the game needs something to keep track of the leaderboards for the Ostende. This also allows for the interesting character dynamics of knowing who is in the lead or above you, without actually having met them yet. This not only allows for foreshadowing but also an instantaneous and natural sense of dread in the player and characters. Additionally, due to Allegretto featuring a wide range of playable characters whose stories occur in a non-linear chronological structure, the leaderboard will change between chapters, allowing you to see if the score of the characters you just played as is the same or lower. This acts as an indication of how far or early in the game you now are. Now, all of this is great in theory, but for it to work, the leaderboard needs to be synchronic rather than diachronic. Hence, the in-universe existence of 'The Bards.' There are a dozen bards, all of which will appear before different players when called upon. As they exist across all time simultaneously, the Bards can be in two places at once. The Bards are Scribe's disciples and right-hand men in both Et Zonam and the Ostende. Whilst no harm can befall them in the mortal realm, they can, however, be harmed in Et Zonam.

Not only does the existence of the Bards allow for synchronic leaderboards, but due to their being just 12 Bards across the time streams, which means you may have the same Bard between chapters. This provides a degree of continuity between playing as various characters, allowing for the game to feel familiar despite a change in playable characters and scenery. The Bard will act as a directory between objectives, as well as the leaderboard, as mentioned, they will also have a part in character tutorials. However, I was conscious that having a Navi (Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time) type companion may become irritating or feel like your hand was being held through the game. Therefore, outside of their purpose, the Bards will be rather cryptic and keep to themselves whilst still having distinct quips and dialogue traits throughout their purposes in-game.

The World Hierarchy and Power System

Previously, it was mentioned that Allegretto would feature powers held by the Artifex Mortus. These abilities are known as Soul Canvas' and are the physical constructions of the soul's creative spirit and drive. A Soul Canvas is a physical and spiritual abilities that stem from the Mortus' chosen creative discipline and medium during life, often linked to the moment in which they first crossed over into Et Zonam, like a snapshot. A Soul Canvas has two types and 5 categories. The two types are auditory, an audio-based power, and the second being Visible, physical powers based on visuals. A Mortus involved in music, for example, or sound design,

would become an auditory Mortus, whilst an artist or calligrapher would become a visible Mortus.

To delve deeper, Mortus abilities fit into at least two of 5 classes, these being; 'Construction,' 'Projection,' 'Elemental,' 'Psychic,' and 'Specialist.' Construction means the actual creation of a physical means through their powers, for example; an audio Mortus may have the ability to create physical sound waves via playing their guitar, and the length of these waves can then be turned into stone or flame to create attacks. This Mortus would be Auditory with Construction / Elemental attacks. A Projection Mortus has the ability to display decals and trick the minds and eyes of others. For example; A visible Mortus may be able to paint tears onto walls, that when seen turn that person into a depressed state. This being a Projection / Psychic attack. Elemental, as mentioned are attacks related to the natural elements. With Psychic, as mentioned, being attacks involving the brain or telepathy. Finally, the specialist, a specialist attack can only be specialist, it cannot be dual typed. A specialist is normally developed over time, whilst the other 4 are discovered as soon as the Mortus is paired with a Curator. Specialist attacks are completely unknown and normally completely specific to the Mortus. They always are a crossover between the Mortus and Curator's creative disciplines however and are seen to develop when a strong bond exists between the two.

So, if an Artifex Mortus is a soul descended from the realms in between with the powers to compete in the Ostende, what is the purpose of the Curator? A curator has two goals, firstly to guide the Mortus through the new era they have dropped into and ensure they find their way in this unfamiliar yet similar world. As well as they themselves act as a brush to the soul canvas, they guide the abilities of the Mortus in gameplay selecting abilities that best fit the encounter or situation with these commands being issued in a way specific to the chosen creative discipline and medium of the Curator. This acts as both a way to keep commands a secret from the opposition but also a way to further the bond between the Curator and Mortus. The Curator in addition to this gains a unique ability that acts a bridge between their powers and Et Zonam. For example, a curator who's a contemporary artist may paint in obscure ways on their surroundings in order to command their Mortus and they have the ability to abstract themselves into complex dimensions and shapes. A Mortus can't function in the world without their Curator, and a Curator can't move forward without their Mortus.

The dynamic between the Mortus and Curator is similar to Rex's connection to the Aegis and through that, Pyra and Mythra in Xenoblade Chronicles 2. This leaves one final plot hole to cover. What happens if the Curator enters Et Zonam before or even during the Ostende. If a Curator has already entered Et Zonam before they make an emotional connection with a Mortus, they can take on the Ostende singlehandedly, but in order to do this, they must make an emotional connection with a Mortus but then reject them in the interrogation. This will provide them a further insight into Et Zonam, making them aware of the Ostende. This is a path of selfishness and arrogance that humanity can take. If a Curator reaches Et Zonam during the Ostende whilst being paired with the Mortus, they themselves will gain abilities akin to their Mortus, massively increasing the power of the two. However, once the Ostende is over, the Curator loses their powers but of course, gains the ability to turn into an Artifex Mortus following death. This also reveals that some Mortus are already aware of the Ostende, having competed in life as a Curator, but this is incredibly rare as many Curators aren't able to reach Et Zonam due to feelings of inferiority compared to their powerful Mortus or a belief that they have already hit their prime during their time as a Curator.

The Trophy

But what is the Ostende for, and what is Scribe's objective in all of this? The Bards reveal to the competitors that the Ostende will allow for Scribe to grant a wish that correlates with something

that creative spirit and work is able to do itself but on a grand scale. For example, art and music can change people's mindsets, change cultures, cultivate a new era, start wars, redefine architecture or simply touch people's hearts. Scribe can grant one of these wish's as long as the Mortus and Curator have the same wish. This is why a Curator who has reached Et Zonam may choose to enter the competition themselves, in order to grant their own specific wish.

So that's the reward of the Ostende, but what is the function of Scribe conducting a grand contest. Firstly, it's for the entertainment of the Gods and their realms, including Et Zonam itself. But also, it's for Scribe to determine if humanity deserves creative spirit and free will until the next hundred years. He's always judging and watching through himself and his Bards to determine if the next era of Humanity has the promise to further progress the world or if we will enter a stagnant era of simply preservation.

This is what Scribe says at the beginning of the Ostende, but throughout the story, you learn that Scribe's intentions may not be as noble and godlike as they may seem. You learn via exploring the history of previous Ostende, talking to people who have competed before, and observing holes in what Scribe says by observing history that Scribe is a liar. He's a false God from a darker realm who maintains his throne and title in secrecy from the other Gods by using the Ostende to steal the creative spirits and ideas of humanity and his competitors which fuel his own endeavours as Deity of the First Two Elements. Despite all the heavens watching and supporting his contest, it's all for selfish desires as he believes that as the God's created the people of Earth and the elements, he then owns their free will and what they do with it, as well as what they use to create. Therefore, all is his. So, in truth, Allegretto is a story of freedom and breaking free of the clutches of darker materials.

The Characters

Having established the world, power system, structure, and plot of Allegretto, it's time to delve into the characters who you'll control and follow throughout the game. Each chapter in Allegretto follows a different pair of Artifex Mortus and Curator, allowing for differences in gameplay and abilities that the player is able to utilise. This is where the game's non-linear structure, the existence of the Bards and synchronic leaderboard all come into effect. Each chapter may occur from the beginning of the Ostende or further in if the characters were especially relevant or their backstories have been explored in a previous chapter.

The story has 4 playable Curators and 3 controllable Artifex Mortus, with one Curator also being a Mortus…

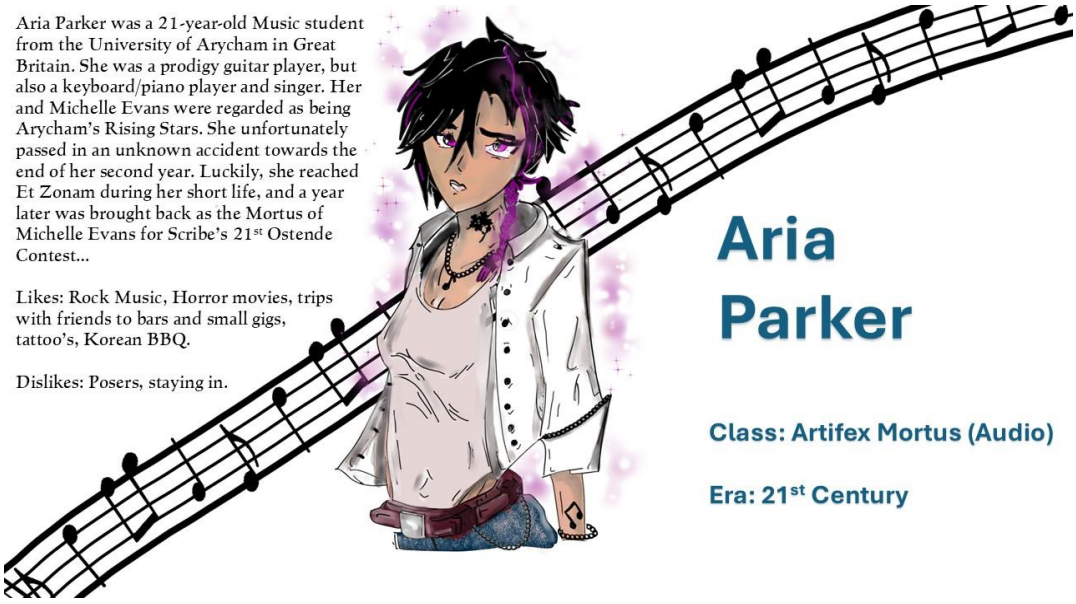
Let's meet the protagonist's…

Chapter 1's Curator: Michelle Evans



Michelle Evans is the first Curator you meet within Allegretto, a 22-year-old recent graduate from the University of Arycham in Great Britain. She's a prodigy pianist who already performs in global tours. She frequently visits her old University late at night to play a piano piece she wrote with her best friend, Aria Parker, who unfortunately passed in an unknown incident during their second year at university. The police dismissed the death as suicide, as many who were questioned in the school were jealous of Aria's incredible rockstar prowess and would demean her 'emo-ish' aesthetic. But Michelle knew this wouldn't have been the case as Aria always had the biggest smile and uplifting personality, but with no evidence the case was dropped. One day in a fit of rage, Michelle lost herself, coming close to Et Zonam before becoming aware of what she was doing and stopping at the gates. She was playing this song they wrote together on a Piano at the University at 2am after a nearby orchestral concert she ran from after the orchestra took a surprise turn organised by her managers to incorporate electric. Since Aria's passing, rock instruments have acted as a trauma trigger for her. She wrote more of the song they made and were unable to finish due to her passing. This event was the emotional connection moment that made Michelle… a curator.

Chapter 1's Artifex Mortus: Aria Parker



Aria Parker is a 21-year-old Music student from the University of Arycham in Great Britain. She was a prodigy guitar player but also a well-versed keyboard/piano player and drums player. She would also sing so essentially could've been a one-woman rock band. This would often unintentionally irritate her bandmates as she would often show them what she imagined for the song on their instruments. Her and her best friend, Michelle Evans were regarded as Arycham Creative University's Rising Stars. She unfortunately passed in an unknown accident towards the end of her second-year. However, she reached Et Zonam during her short life at a young age. Her mother had passed at childbirth, and her Dad was a renowned rockstar during the early 1990's and would often show Aria music and instruments during her childhood, they'd often play together and when Aria was 6 years-old she was not only given her own first guitar but also wrote and performed her first song to her Dad that same year. The look of pride on her father's face whilst she played not only stayed with her throughout her life as a source of encouragement, especially as her Dad had returned to tour with little contact just before she moved to Arycham, but also was the moment that made Aria get so lost in the strings that she reached Et Zonam. A year after her death, Michelle started the emotional connection, bringing back Aria as the Auditory Artifex Mortus of Michelle Evans. Reunited, the two take on Scribe's 21st Ostende with their Bard, Barret.

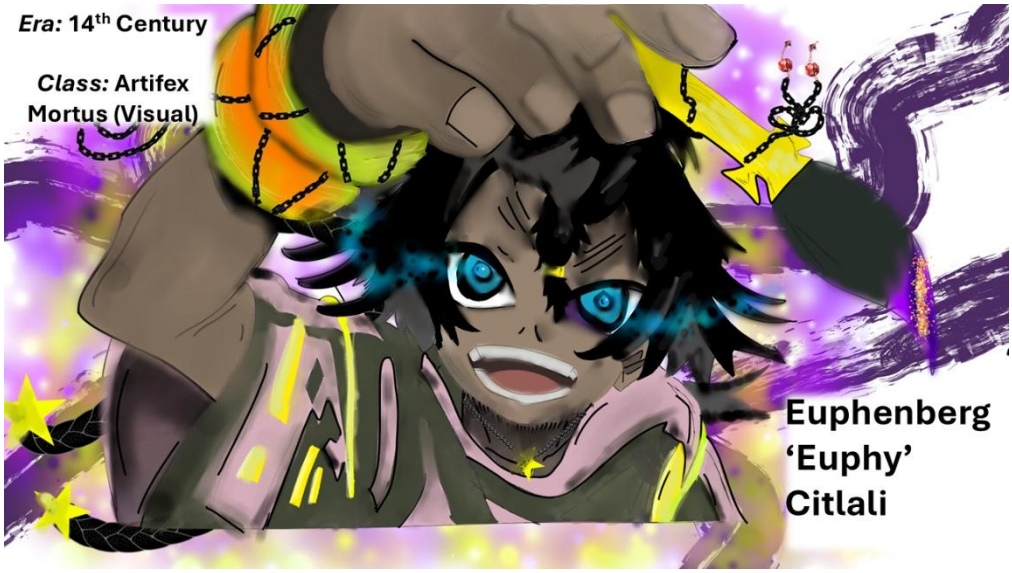
Chapter 2's Curator: Kuro Tanaka



Tanaka is the playable character during Chapter 2. He's a 45-year-old Shoka (Japanese Kanji Calligrapher) from Kanazawa, the capital of the Ishikawa Prefecture in Japan. This Kanji artist and writer was born in this historic city which holds a special history with Samurai training, as well as once being a Geisha district. Due to his heritage, Kuro-san is well versed in swordplay with his Chained Kasari Katana. With a goofy yet stern personality, he is mostly regarded by his peers and fellow civilians of Kanazawa as an old-man who can't let go a bygone era he wasn't even born in. When voicing his feelings about his dismissal through Booze and calligraphy about being 'out of time,' as well as the modern disrespect for traditional Japanese culture in the more Urban areas, he resonated with a Mortus' soul existing between the realms, starting an emotional connection. This being with once Ancient Aztec Priestess, Euphenberg.

Domenico Urso

Chapter 2's Artifex Mortus: Euphenberg Citlali



Euphenberg or Euphy, was a 13th century Aztec Priestess from Aztlan, now North Mexico, North America. Euphy had the vital ability during the Aztec period to communicate with the Gods, and whilst she couldn't put the Gods' divine wisdom into words due to it being so beyond mortal comprehension, she could however communicate it via her Art. Hence, she became the youngest and most influential priestess in Aztec history. However, the elders who envied her power which rendered them useless in the civilisation organised a plot and assassinated Euphy on just her 14th Birthday. They believed that if she died, her power would be passed on to the next generation, someone they could find, raise, control, and manipulate from the moment of their birth into the perfect weapon and spokesperson for the Elders. However, this was not the case and Euphy's power wasn't one of reincarnation, which is something we learn during her character arc. Euphy herself is a bubbly and immature child who gets so locked into her artwork as she scribbles away giggling to herself that she can simply not be disturbed as the rest of the world fades away. And this is the secret behind her ability, as she is the person who has come closest to Et Zonam, she reaches the other realm every time she paints and due to this Scribe knows her by name. She's the only person in history to have achieved such a feat at such an early age, or so we are led to believe.

Centuries later, Euphy has returned as the Artifex Mortus belonging to the curator, Kuro Tanaka, after his calligraphy spoke to her as a product of tragedy of a bygone era. Now they take on the Ostende together with the shared goal of preserving history and their respective cultures across all realms eternally.

Chapter 3's Curator: William Chraner A.K.A Billy 'Goat'



William Chraner is a Graffiti Street Artist who goes under the anonymous alias known as Billy Goat. From Harlem, New York City, he has a delicate family situation, running away from his single mother who following his abusive father walking out on them essentially shut down mentally and now lives in a care hospital, he occasionally comes close to visiting but hasn't been able to for a few years now. He now lives with his uncle occasionally, a chilled out single 34-year-old who feels more like his best friend or older brother than an uncle. They come up with his graffiti material together and is fully supportive of his art career, being a DJ himself for the New York City underground club and dogfighting scene. Due to this, most evenings Chraner's uncle isn't home, which is when he roams the streets

creating installations under the name Billy Goat. Recently, he's become involved with some dangerous people however when creating a mural near one of his uncle's dogfighting rings after going with his for the first time to check it out. Turns out the mural was found to be insulting by a local group of thugs. After the tension builds for a couple days, William is attacked right below his apartment in an alley, hearing this his uncle runs to help but unfortunately becomes hospitalised. Out of ideas or options, Chraner begins hitting the last standing thug with a pipe, and spraying spray paint into his eyes, anything to survive.

It's this fit of uncontrollable rage that puts Billy in the zone, and he reaches Et Zonam, forming an emotional connection with renaissance serial killer, D'Angelo De Pontifex.

Chapter 3's Artifex Mortus: D'Angelo De Pontifex

Pontifex is a man of mystery, born in the 16th century, he was at his prime during the middle of the Renaissance Period in the Kingdom of Hungary, the second nation to adopt the Renaissance from Italy. He discovered Virgil's Aeneid during his travels in his 20s which then inspired his descent into inventing and sculpture... and organised crime. The national epic of Virgil's Aeneid describes a prophetic vision from the underworld exploring Roman beliefs around the afterlife and the importance of a proper burial. A famous line from the poem which he often quotes is 'Tears are at the centre of things, and human suffering touches the heart.' Following his travels, he began investigating the concept of death and its possibility as a power source or way to see deeper into the Universe. He would do this in his best friend's attic during their youth before both moving to a small manor house after some successful endeavours. He later grew a cohort of disciples and was seen as the mad one between him and his best friend due to this fascination with death and its relation to the elements and souls. Meanwhile the best friend was focusing more on historic sculpture and representing life and its joys. The two later separated with the best friend starting his own school, whilst Pontifex ended up employing an underground gang of black-market veterans and killers, as he was getting nowhere by simply investigating death, he needed test subjects. His magnum opus to which he came close to creating is a way of delaying death however just as his creation was almost finished. He was arrested and executed for being an associate and ringmaster to mass-homicide.



However, during his life, he too reached Et Zonam and now as Billy Goat uses his beloved art form for harming others, an emotional connection has been established. And reluctantly Billy joins Pontifex as they journey through the Ostende. With the shared objective of learning how to bridge the peace of death with the mania of life. So, Billy can save his uncle and Mother, and so Pontifex can finish his creation.

Chapter 4's Curator/Mortus: Jason 'Rocky' Rage

Jason Rage was a world famous Hip-Hop/Rock Hybrid star during the late 80s to early 90s. Most known for his insane ability to hold a keyboard like a guitar and play it on stage whilst running around signing and rapping. He's credited for setting the stage for the future of Hip-Hop in the 20th century, a genuine living legend. Or at least he was. In the early 2000's he got married and had a daughter and disregarded the paparazzi and his public image entirely which no one minded, seeing as he was clearly enjoying his personal life after 30 years of fame and fortune. Until he announced a new tour unexpectedly, word on the street was this was due to his daughter moving away for university and his wife's death, giving him the time and space to return to the limelight. Rocky announced a global tour on social media before any planning had



occurred or he'd spoken with his old manager. His manager had moved on from the historic Rocky Rage, and many believed he was an old man with no future in the industry. And right they were, no one remembered Rocky. He did a couple gigs in bars which only half sold out and would often be kicked out drunk and forced to sleep on the street. But no matter what, he couldn't go home like this. During his youth, he reached Et Zonam upon the recording of his first 'at the time' self-titled album, 'Parker.' Rage was approached by a Bard, he was told in a years' time, a grand contest would befall the world held every century to define the future of the arts. He was told he would be able to pick a Mortus as 'he has a sponsor in the game.' Rocky laughed and rejected the offer, saying he wanted to compete himself, he wanted only his wish granted by his own accord. To which the Bard responded by saying this is what the sponsor said he would do. Rocky rejected his Mortus and entered the 21ST Ostende on his own.

Scribe: False Deity of the First Two Elements

The man who needs no introduction. The invader of the God's and ruler of the Ostende and Et Zonam. He guides the world on Art and Music, and all things related to creative will residing in the first 2 elements of God's creation. That's if such a God really existed. Scribe didn't create the Ostende; he's actually a contestant from the very first Ostende back before it was a holy ritual and more so just a mortal showcase and exhibition in 50 BC. He was a monk who operated on his own accord, something of a cult leader before religion even existed. His subjects would gift him their ideas and philosophy's and he would publish them on his own saying to his subjects it was for the good of free will. Scribe was aware of the Gods and of the realm of Et Zonam long before he reached the Zone. So spent his life trying to achieve Et Zonam, and once he did and returned to Earth, he devised a plan to escape the inbetween and once he knew how, he committed suicide to enter the inbetween of his own timing. He made it into Et Zonam and as a corrupt Mortus, used his powers to take control of Et Zonam, bringing some of his disciples through the gate to act as his Bards. Scribe tricked the other Gods into believing he had existed in Et Zonam since the beginning of time, as it was a realm in which the Gods rarely checked upon, as they could see humanity was creating and had free will. Scribe then pitched the Ostende to the other Gods as a source of entertainment and from the 1st Century, it began. Growing more popular each century with people watching across the realms, introducing new parts of the game such as sponsors. However, Scribe's true intention is to use the Ostende to steal the ideas and creative spirit of his competitors, he never succeeded as a creative himself, hence it took him so long to reach Et Zonam in his life. He was no appreciation for art or artists, he simply wants to be revered and known as the best. Can he be stopped or will humanity slowly have its free will stripped from themselves?



Welcome to the 21st Ostende, to Allegretto…