

project proposal ashanti mighten

by Ashanti Mighten

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Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

BA (Hons) Computer Games Design

**Independent Project:
Project Proposal ACCA6020**

Worlds Apart

'How do we relate to characters worlds apart from our own?'

Ashanti Mighten

Student No. 2304545

Supervisor: Awaiting Allocation

October 17th, 2025

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2

Worlds Apart: 3

Aims and Objectives:..... 5

Resources: 7

Bibliography: 7

Worlds Apart:

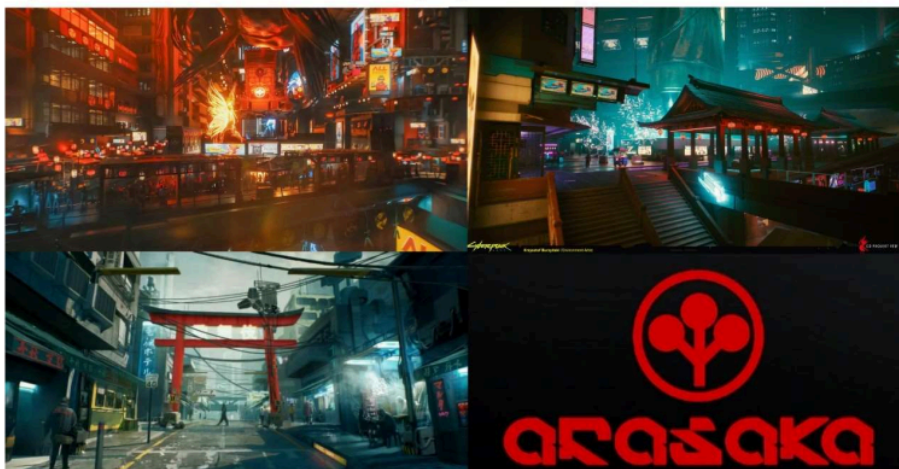
how do we relate to characters worlds apart from our own?

In my independent project, I would like to propose the question of how different genres of games and media may tackle representation whilst sticking true to their worldbuilding and setting, and how their audiences relate to these characters despite how they may have little in common with them visually and thematically. How differently does a game that's set a thousand years in the future in a dystopian society create its characters, to a fantastical fictional world of magic or superheroes? I intend to explore how gender, culture, ability, body types or other traits are expressed differently in cyberpunk genres versus fantasy. I am planning to create a final physical artbook, split into two sections of cyberpunk and fantasy, with character designs and research throughout.

I want to delve into the rationale of how games like Cyberpunk 2077 [1] portray class and race so vividly in its universe, and how 'cyberware' [2] can impact a character's experience in the world (akin to how concepts like race, gender and even disabilities could affect someone's experience in our everyday life). It is worth noting that since Cyberpunk 2077's inception, throughout the game and genre itself, lay orientalism and xenophobia. As covered by Kazuma Hashimoto from Polygon [3], the main storyline of Cyberpunk 2077 is the ineffective dismantling of a large Japanese corporation that pulls the strings behind the city's major events. Even with the negative portrayal of a Japanese corporation, it also praises and- some could say- appropriates a mix of Chinese and Japanese culture (as seen in locations such as Japantown and Kabuki) in the dystopian society, as if the fear of America no longer *being* American in the future is dystopian in itself.

[4]

Japanese and Chinese influences seen in Cyberpunk 2077



I am also interested in exploring why fantastical genres seem to have so many species; like elves, dwarfs, witches and wizards, Gods and Goddesses, and how the numerous species would navigate their respective worlds being so intertwined with other species, and how this relate to our lives. I find it particularly interesting that fantasy games specifically allow people to experience a life other than their own. This is of course not exclusive to the fantasy genre; however, it is only emphasised by how many different species other than human exist in these spaces. As supported by an article from SDLC Corp [5], it is mentioned that fantasy games (not limited to, but choice games are included in this) allow the player to explore different aspects of their identity (again, not limited to, but including race, gender, age and class) with freedom and without consequence. This allows for self-expression, and especially in games that allow character customisation such as Baldur's Gate 3 [6], the player truly feels immersed in the universe, and are more emotionally inclined to care for 'their' character and their relationships with the NPCs and cast.

[7]



Character design plays a big role in why or how our audiences can relate to characters in media, and the mentality behind why someone may gravitate towards a specific genre. Split Fiction [8] is a game that touches upon this— both main protagonists are fans of each genre (cyberpunk and fantasy), and the further the player ventures through the game, the more they find understanding in why the characters themselves find solace in writing about their respective genre. Despite not being a half-cyborg, half-human, despite not being of an elven race— why can we, as people, see ourselves in characters like these? This is what my final report will cover.

Aims and Objectives:

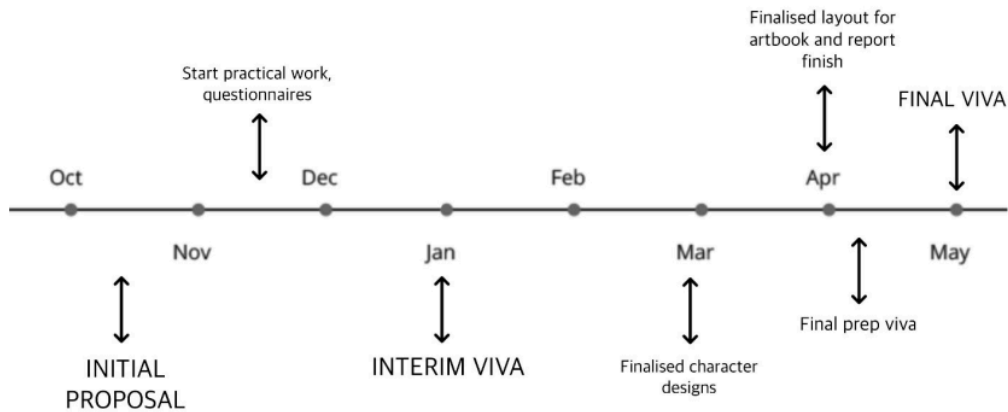
deliverables, intentions and timeline

As aforementioned, I would like to create an artbook on character design. In this, I may also be exploring the different art styles that can be seen in each genre, time-permitting. The artbook would be split into two sections, one would be centred around the cyberpunk aesthetic, and I would be creating characters that fit into the aesthetic, whilst the other section would be revolving around fantasy. I will be including my notes, research (both written and preliminary studies), as well as the design process for each character, creating reference sheets and including QR codes/links to timelapses of any final illustrations. I will also be conducting public questionnaires, exploring how people relate to their favourite characters in media, and later in the process, I will be creating a questionnaire on how my audience relates differently to the characters that I will personally design for this project. These questionnaires will be publicly on numerous sites, such as LinkedIn [9], X/Twitter [10] and TikTok [11]. I intend to open this project with preliminary research on two games of each genre. Cyberpunk 2077 (2020)/Cyberpunk Edgerunners (2022) [12], and God of War (2018) [13] /God of War Ragnarök (2022) [14]. I have chosen these two franchises as they were released at similar dates, I would consider them of the same relative size, and the fact that they were both initially PlayStation [15] releases so would technically have a similar pool of players. I intend for my research to remain as fair as possible, and data from questionnaires will allow me to gather both opposing and agreeing viewpoints.

My intended timeline is as follows:

1. **Oct-Nov: Preliminary research into Cyberpunk and God of War;** how their players relate to the game differently, what they appreciate differently about the characters and how their characters are designed—I will be doing this through articles on reviews of the game and questionnaires for the public.
2. **Nov-Dec:** Then, I will shift my research toward character design in the broader sense in both genres. **In this stage I will start to create practical work using my research**, such as studies in silhouette design, shape language and any cultural designs that are appropriate to be applying in the future character design stage (*i.e. in God of War, the main protagonist Kratos is originally from Greek mythology, however the post-2018 games derive their lore from Norse mythology—how does this effect audience relativity?*). **At this point, I will also be releasing the questionnaires** for public viewing.

3. **(INTERIM VIVA) Dec-March:** I will then go on to creating the character designs. My aim is to create **at least two finalised character designs for each genre-** with **at least one reference sheet for a character**. As I am designing the characters, I will be including my research within the artbook itself, as well as the writing section of my independent project.
4. **April-May:** I will be finalising the layout for the artbook in early April, as well as hopefully getting it printed. If I cannot source a printer for the artbook, I will opt to create it digitally. **I aim to finish my report in early to mid-April.**
5. **(FINAL VIVA) Early May:** After I have readied the final viva, I will be creating a portfolio website of work from this project and from previous ones, to prepare for the industry.



DELIVERABLES:

1. **Artbook.**
2. **A report delving deeper into this project with my research.**
3. **Final presentation that summarises this project.**

Resources:

brief overview of concepts, studies and literature to be used

Some resources that I may opt to use in my research. This is a brief overview, and I intend to include more in my future work on this project.

1. DrMick: a qualified therapist that plays video games with a focus on their characters- he has played both Cyberpunk 2077 and God of War Ragnarök. [16]
2. Designing Creatures and Characters by Marc Taro Holmes. [17]
3. Fundamentals of Character Design by Meybis Ruiz Cruz, Randy Dale and Sweeney Boo [18]
4. The Art of Character by David Corbett [19]
5. Creative Character Design by Bryan Tillman [20]

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[2] "Cyberware," Cyberpunk 2077 Fandom Wiki, <https://cyberpunk.fandom.com/wiki/Cyberware>. [Accessed: Oct. 19, 2025].

[3] "The cyberpunk genre has been Orientalist for decades — but it doesn't have to be," Kazuma Hashimoto, 2021. <https://www.polygon.com/2021/1/30/22255318/cyberpunk-2077-genre-xenophobia-orientalism/> [Accessed: Oct. 19, 2025].

[4] "Cyberpunk 2077 Fandom Wiki," <https://cyberpunk.fandom.com>. [Accessed: Oct. 19, 2025].

[5] "The Psychology of Playing Fantasy Games: Why We Escape to Fantasy Worlds," Neville Adam, 2025. <https://sdlccorp.com/post/the-psychology-of-playing-fantasy-games-why-we-escape-to-fantasy-worlds/> [Accessed: Oct. 19, 2025].

[6] "Baldur's Gate 3" Larian Studios, Ghent, Belgium, 2023. [Accessed: Oct. 19, 2025].

[7] "God of War Inventory" Interfaceingame, <https://interfaceingame.com/screenshots/god-of-war-ragnarok-inventory/> [Accessed: Oct. 19, 2025].

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- [19] "The Art of Character: Creating Memorable Characters for Fiction, Film, and TV." D. Corbett, New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2013. [Accessed: Oct. 19, 2025].
- [20] "Creative Character Design." B. Tillman, Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2012. [Accessed: Oct 19, 2025].

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GRADEMARK REPORT

FINAL GRADE

GENERAL COMMENTS

73/100

BA GAMES DESIGN		
ACCA6020 INDEPENDENT PROJECT // 2025/26 // (#1) PROJECT PROPOSAL (5%)		
Student:	ASHANTI MIGHTEN (2304545)	
Mark:	73%	
Intro / A&O (500 words)		
Project title; Identification of a specific problem to be investigated; Well-defined aims and SMART objectives; Explaining why this project is worth doing; Discussion of what the project needs to do in order to be a success; Description any deliverables that will be produced at the end of the project.	40	73
Background to the Project (500 words)		
Description of how the work to be done by in the project relates to the work identified in the literature review; Discussion of any ethical issues raised by the project Identifying what has already been done within the field; Topic familiarity; Brief literature review using appropriate sources – 6-8	40	74

journal papers and book chapters rather than just websites; Selection of relevant models & concepts		
Document Presentation		
Correct spelling, grammar and punctuation; Flow of narrative/fluency; Coherence; Word processed ; Correct use of referencing with bibliography; Strict word limit	20	71
TOTAL	100	73%
Feedback / Comments		
. A provocative and thought-provoking title, that encapsulates the area of study, the themes, the social, ethical topics, etc. The initial opening queries and notions immediately start to propose how we relate to these characters, and exploring how these are often interpreted, within social / media representations and beyond. Interestingly, some of these notions seem set to question our <i>own</i> positioning, associations (to begin) and whether we can start to define how we relate to any idea of a character's (individual's) portrayal of agency or identity (?). . Good to read the possible inclusion on character creation and evocation, to do with proportion, class stereotypes, cultural tropes and other signs / signifiers. In the highly competitive world of pre-production and concept art (including world building pre-visualisation), there are indications of		

aiming to discern between issues and influences of class, gender, race, etc. To arrive at a cohesive picture of the state of play within the trends emerging, that will only help to inform your own practical work.

.
The focus on fantasy (aka legendary and mythic), and how these are presented / determined, with considerations on different archetypes -roles, together with parallels drawn from Cyberpunk (aka dystopian futures and advances technologically) is a good mix. Lots to target and unfold, with hybrids or cross-cultural examples, in your ongoing research and via portfolio designs.

.
This is strong work. Suggestions To move to (a) third person phrasing for future submissions; (b) to adopt shorter bolder statements or points, at times >> for more impact / precision. In determining your critical strengths, you do not describe too much (which is good) and you have both *provocative* – and – *evocative* statements to make.

.
Case studies referenced indicate a strong appreciation and hold on the genre(s) constructs, that will add value significance and relevance to your own findings (development in the coming months). Clear signposting and specification on the subsequent stages of the project (and possible aesthetic ventures), with feasible targets and deliverables. Solid set of web' and text-based references, to end, that relate well to psychology, character designing and the industry. Well done!

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7

PAGE 8
