

Brief for creative writing prototype website

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Mars Lewis

Project: Reclaiming the golden calf

+6421911553

[Marshall lewis_nz@hotmail.com](mailto:Marshall_lewis_nz@hotmail.com)

Introduction

Hello!

I am in my final year of a PhD in creative writing at Auckland University of Technology.

I plan to deliver my project digitally, online, so that I can include a more rich, audio-visual and interactive experience. However, this is still primarily a text-based project.

I am seeking support to develop a prototype that will test and refine my thinking for the UX/UI and look & feel of my creative piece.

Below, I offer notes related to:

- [A] The project and story
- [B] Art and visual design
- [C] Prototype programming
- [D] AI-virtual-human programming
- [E] The sample chapter (The Taskmaster)
- [F] Reference for colour pallet

[A] The project and story

My writing project is experimental, combining aspects of ritual and magical realism. The main character is engaging in virtual, dream-like and hallucinogenic journeys into their personal, family and religio-cultural mythologies. They believe that these journeys change the myths and thereby change the world. They travel up and down the biblical Mount Sinai in an elevator (a mobile cocktail lounge and theatre) getting out at various levels to engage characters, including their deceased parents, Moses, God and others. A virtual character – the Master of Scenarios – serves as a narrator, a guide to the main character and the elevator operator. They also perform the role of other characters.

[B] Art and visual design

I want the look & feel to be based on a combination of *sketches* and *schematics* – as though the images seen are *notes to artists and technologists collaborating on the project*. I have contracted with an artist to produce images for the prototype – these will be provided.

Imagine a team of designers looking at design documents together and scribbling annotations on these documents. For example, no images should be fully rendered. Edges of images might include a

hint of rendering and colour for highlighting. The images should not be shaded or textured – but again, the edges might be suggestive. Colours should be muted – mainly grey tones and earth tones, with occasional highlights of dark red (symbolising blood) and dark gold (symbolising the golden calf). A colour palette is provided below. Images will be used as interface design elements, such as being watermarked behind text and used for various borders and content containers. The piece is not illustrated.

Key visual elements include:

[1] *The elevator car.* Inside the elevator is a bar/cocktail lounge with bar stools, booths and café tables, a small stage and a control centre for the operator with various levers and dials, like an airplane cockpit.

[2] *The chair.* In this chair, one engages the technologies for the dream-like journeys. Electromagnetic and pharmacological delivery systems induce various states of consciousness and enable communications. Hand controls combine aspects of a computer keyboard and musical keyboard.

[3] *The elevator operator.* This is a virtual human with very little detail – like an artist’s mannequin. This character takes the form of other characters. No face other than subtle contours, as though faces will be projected onto this surface. Gender non-specific.

[4] *Mount Sinai.* A sketch of a stylised mountain in which the elevator is travelling (all directions) and includes various levels and areas for encounters. Paths that Moses uses to go up and down. A place at the top where god lives.

[C] Prototype programming

I need four pages produced. The book has three parts, and the second part has multiple scenarios. There is one sample *scenario* (like short book chapter) in this prototype. That scenario is a single webpage. However, I want the user experience to include the entire user experience from the “cover” to the scenario. By analogy, the prototype is like a book with only a *cover*, *table of contents* (navigational interface) and *one sample chapter*. This sample chapter (and all others that will ultimately be included) consists of a single scrolling page.

The pages to create for the prototype include:

[Page 1] Cover

This should look like a book cover, not a website

If feasible, it should open full screen

Title: Reclaiming the Golden Calf

Image: A graphical Mount Sinai with a small village at its base

Interactivity: None is required except to progress to Page 2

Audio: Audio file begins to play upon launch and dynamically fades out upon selecting to proceed

[Page 2] Village

This is a graphical *table of contents*

Image: a sketch of a village

Visible selections include:

Part 1 – Orientation

Part 2 – Sinai (*the only option available*)

Part 3 – Recapitulation

Interactivity: Only Part 2 is active

The virtual character – *Master of Scenario* – will be visible and selectable

Audio: Audio file begins to play upon launch and dynamically fades out upon selecting to proceed

[Page 3] Sinai

This page is a *graphical table of contents* for selecting book chapters

Different locations represent chapters

(Ultimately, there may be 12-15 chapters in the final project.)

Interactivity: Only one option will be active for the prototype: *The Taskmaster*

The user also needs to be able to navigate back to page 2

Audio: Audio file begins to play upon launch and dynamically fades out upon selecting *The Taskmaster*

[Page 4] The Taskmaster

This is the one sample scenario (like a short book chapter) for this prototype

Text of the story provided below (it's very short!)

The user needs to be able to navigate back to Page 3

User experience and interactivity for The Taskmaster

(*the one scenario in the prototype*)

[a] Auto-scrolling

The page scrolls slowly – the user controls the speed of scrolling

Sections of the page fade-in smoothly at the bottom of the page as they appear

[b] Layout

The page layout is like a play or movie script

Some content is colour-coded, e.g., characters, visuals, and audio descriptions

[c] Events

As the elements reach a certain height on the screen, things may happen, e.g.

- An image appearing
- A sound file playing
- A text box appearing

It is as though the page is code being executed

[d] Selectable text

Some text will be selectable by rolling over or clicking

Rolling over text may smoothly raise associated text and/or image

Clicking on text may raise a text box

[e] Characters

Characters will be represented with small images, like social media icons

[D] AI-Virtual Human Interface

An *AI-based virtual human character* plays multiple roles on the project

The user can select to have the story “read” to them by this character (using text-to-speech)

The user can have a conversation with this character, such as asking questions about the story

I am assuming the following technical tasks:

[1] Train the AI on provided text

[2] AI output is text, synthesised speech or both, selectable by the user

[E] Prototype Story: The Taskmaster

Atop Sinai, as Yahweh revises stone tablets and Moses lays prone, Hermes slips down onto the mountain carrying a letter and large wool sack.

“Shall I?” Hermes asks. Yahweh nods.

“My Dearest, Before proceeding with the Hebrews, please consider the enclosed. All my love, your Asherah.”

From the sack then springs an Egyptian Taskmaster, caked in sand and partially decomposed. He slowly raises a bony arm toward Moses.

“He killed me,” the Taskmaster groans.

“Lord, he was brutally beating a man,” says Moses.

“You could have ordered me to stop,” says the Taskmaster. “And reported me. You had options.”

Moses cries out, “Lord, I was filled with anger!”

Yahweh sighs. “I inspired you to strike this man and go into exile and eventually find me.”

The Taskmaster is surprised and confused. “You had him kill me as – a call to adventure? Surely, you had options.”

Yahweh whispers to Moses, “It felt wonderful to unleash that rage, did it not?”

Moses boldly stares into God. “Do you feel pleasure when you unleash *your* rage?”

“May I go back now?” the Taskmaster asks. Hermes helps him back into the sack.

“It is not beyond Zeus to fake this letter – to fake the Egyptian,” ponders Yahweh.

“They are genuine. Do you wish to reply?” Hermes asks, pen poised.

“Tell her – that I miss her, and that I would probably make better choices if she were here.”

“Very good, and be well,” says Hermes as he glides away, off Sinai.

[F] Reference for colour pallet

I'm looking primarily for muted earth tones – mostly grey
The red and gold are for accents

Carnelian	Black Coffee	Gold Metallic	Beaver	Space Cadet	Khaki Web	Coffee	Silver Pink	Raw Umber	Taupe Gray
159, 25, 22	47, 35, 43	221, 184, 93	169, 136, 117	56, 60, 98	192, 165, 138	110, 80, 63	188, 170, 163	129, 99, 66	135, 129, 131