

A Brief Background

This game was created to explore the difficulties of capturing cultural memory and the Anthropocene alike through a more traditional institutional lens. It is not meant to provide solutions to provide a thought experiment on why solutions are so hard to come by. The fictional world used is not necessarily meant to abstract us from our own problems but rather to reflect them back at us. The project tries to do a lot of things and probably only succeeds at some of them. However, there is something to be said for creating artistic scholarship to express the Anthropocene, and I hope that can be reflected in the game.

Game Walkthrough

The Scrap Keeper

- 1) Go to Hanen and visit The Ruins on the old roads. Speak with The Traveller to obtain a drop of oil.
- 2) Open your map and go to Àndāzī.
 - a. Visit the Town of Festivals to meet with The Pilot.
 - b. Go to The Swallowed Beach and follow the prompts to obtain Plastic Iconography.
 - c. Go to A Park for Hoodoos. You will empty the oil, and your log for One Last Drop of Oil will be complete.
- 3) Open your map and go to Ravaaga. Visit the Museum of Progress and enter The Machines of Industry wing. The Curator will give you a rusty key.
- 4) From Ravaaga, go to The Mines and meet with The Pilot. Follow the prompts to obtain Photos of Scars.
- 5) Go to Majaatl and from there enter The Contested Zone. Go further to the deforested clearing and take the old man's boat. You will head to the server farm and obtain The Obsolete Server Farm.
- 6) Go to Hanen and enter The Capital. Follow the source of the smog. With The Curator's key, you will be able to enter the factory. You will obtain The Machine That Remains.
- 7) The game will notify you that you have all five items. Click on the link in the notification message to finish the route.

The Solastalgic Poet

- 1) Open your map and go to Hanen.
 - a. Visit The Capital and enter the house to obtain Relics of Illness.
 - b. Visit Community Farms to obtain Taxidermy Cows.
 - c. Visit the ruins and examine the architecture to find a poem. Look at the poem to start the quest for the anthologies item.
- 2) Go to Majaatl.
 - a. Visit the Flooded Terrace and write the red sun haiku.
 - b. Go to the River of Retellings and then the Floating Theatre. Watch the show and obtain A Dance for the Burdened.
- 3) Go to Àndāzī.

- a. Go to A Park for Hoodoos and then visit the Empty Gallery. You will automatically examine the red sun paintings on the wall. Head to The Artist's display and follow the prompts to obtain Empty Databases.
- 4) Go to Ravaaga.
 - a. Enter the Museum of Progress and head to The Art of the Aftermath. Speak with The Artist to obtain the last item needed for Anthologies of the Red Sun.
- 5) The game will notify you that you have all five items. Click on the link in the notification message to finish the route.

The Eco Orator

- 1) Open your map and go to Majaatl.
 - a. Speak with the woman at The Flooded Terrace.
 - b. Talk to your grandfather, who is in the deforested clearing next to The Contested Zone.
 - c. Your grandfather can take you to the River of Retellings. From there, watch the poet perform at The Floating Theatre. Once you have done all three, you will obtain The Shapeshifting River.
- 2) Go to Hanen and visit Community Farms. You will obtain Tasting Trails.
- 3) Go to Ravaaga and visit The Mountain Peak. Follow all the links in the community centre and you will obtain The Collective Memory of the Mountain.
- 4) Go to Āndāzī and visit Town of Festivals. Go shopping to obtain Weaving Patterns.
- 5) To obtain Old Lines you must visit the following locations, even if you have unlocked them on other routes:
 - a. The Mines, Museum of Progress, and The Mountain Peak in Ravaaga.
 - b. The Capital, The Ruins, and Community Farms in Hanen.
 - c. The Contested Zone, The River of Retellings, and The Flooded Terrace in Majaatl.
 - d. The Swallowed Beach, A Park for Hoodoos, and Town of Festivals in Āndāzī.
- 6) The game will notify you that you have all five items. Click on the link in the notification message to finish the route.

The Archaeo Futurist

- 1) Open your map and go to Hanen. Take the old highway route. Examine the ruins and enter them. Speak with The Traveller. Once you are back outside, you will have obtained (Un)recognizable Ruins.
- 2) Open your map and go to Majaatl.
 - a. You will need to go to the Contested Zone and examine the dried herbs.
 - b. Return to Majaatl on your map and go to the river (River of Retellings). First, smell the flowers.
 - c. Then, return to the river and head to the Floating Theatre. Watch *Rituals for the Extinct*. When you have done all three things you will have obtained The Scent of an Extinct Flower.
- 3) Open your map and go to Ravaaga. Head to The Mines and follow the prompts. The game will notify you that you have obtained The Silurian Stratigraphic Sample once you are finished.
- 4) Return to Ravaaga and head to the mountain peak. Pick up the bead.
 - a. Go to the museum and speak to The Curator. She will explain the bead to you and you will have finished Pleistocene-Oriented Programming.

- 5) Explore The Space Race wing of the museum. While there, you will obtain A Piece of Space Debris.
- 6) The game will notify you that you have all five items. Click on the link in the notification message to finish the route.

Other Tips

- 1) You should be able to play the routes in any order.
- 2) Once you have completed all four routes and deposited all twenty items, the game will prompt you to go to the ending sequence. The Solar Punks is the ending sequence and plays out in a fairly linear fashion.
- 3) The save function is in the header. You may save at any time.
- 4) The Traveller only gives two routes items but all four routes have unique dialogue.

Audiovisual and World-building Materials

There were some audiovisual materials that were picked because they captured a generic and easily recognizable feeling that could be understood by the majority of readers, like scenes of snowy mountains and desert hoodoos. However, the examples and choices picked for specific reasons are listed below.

The world also began as a more in-depth endeavor, but most of that ended up being scrapped as I changed the format of the thesis. Originally, the narrative of each culture was to feature more prominently and the item descriptions would be mixed with fictional worldbuilding and academic scholarship. However, beta readers found it a bit too confusing to read so I ended up separating the two and keeping the worldbuilding elements more basic. Some of the background that didn't make it into the game is also explained below.

Majaatl/Eco Orator

Majaatl is loosely based on the tropical ecoregions of the world, which is why flooding is a predominant theme there.

Because Majaatl is the home of the Eco-Orator, it has more voice-acting and audio than the other routes. In the original worldbuilding, Majaatl was a culture with oral literature. In the final product that is reflected best in The Shapeshifting River, whose different stories are voice-acted even if they are also written down (since it is a text game, after all). The Collective Memory of the Mountain and Constructed Eco(Tones) are also audio pieces put together. For the mountain, it is a combined soundscape of a recording from a mountain in France, the crushing of flower petals, wind chimes, and the Tibetan singing bowl drone that plays in the beginning and ending as well. For the Eco(Tones), the sounds that play are a close recording of ants moving on a dead tree, NASA's sonification of black hole data, and an Arduino project that makes sounds from plant vibrations.

Majaatl's imagery is from various rainforests, Venice, Bali, and Fenghuang County in China. These areas are all susceptible to flooding and other unpredictable climate changes, particularly due to global warming or destruction of local ecosystems. Bali in particular is also susceptible to being a trash dump for nations in the Global North, whether through tourism or the shipping of waste to Southeast Asian countries. It goes without saying that rainforests also suffer from deforestation, violence against

Indigenous tribes, and a variety of other problems. The main soundscape that plays in Majaatl is a field recording taken from Reserva Nacional Tambopata in Peru, in the Amazon River Basin.

Àndāzī/Solastalgic Poet

Àndāzī is based on the arid and desert ecoregions of the world, and reflects themes of finding meaning in emptiness through the Solastalgic Poet's route.

The main soundscape in Àndāzī is a field recording from the Mojave Desert, which is a protected national park. The beach/ocean recording is from Hanakāpī'ai Beach, a popular but dangerous tourist spot in Hawai'i, and the market recording is from a market in Palestine. All of these areas have been affected by colonial violence and resource exploitation. While Àndāzī in the game is not colonized, it does suffer from a reliance on tourist economies and foreign investment. The Mojave Desert, however, was chosen because it is a fairly well-protected ecoregion, reflected in A Park for Hoodoos (although the Mojave itself does not have hoodoos).

The imagery is taken mainly from the MENA area; the market picture is of a rug-seller in Marrakesh and the main picture is of a region in Saudi Arabia. I chose Marrakesh because in the game's narrative, Àndāzī is inundated with tourists and the markets create generic "traditional" products to appeal to them; Marrakesh is one of the most visited places in the MENA area, and in the picture, you can see a group of White tourists centered around the rug seller. The Saudi Arabia picture was very specifically chosen because of who created it. The picture was posted by what appears to be an official NEOM account on the stock image site Unsplash. NEOM is the pet project of Saudi Arabian prince Mohammed bin Salman. NEOM is meant to be a new futuristic city, and the caption of the image states that the area photographed will be part of NEOM's initiative to protect biodiversity in the area. However, anyone who has heard of NEOM has also heard about its violence towards the Indigenous Howeitat people and other violent acts (Gardner, 2020). In other words, it is best not to believe a word of the project. There is a worry in me that the desert in this picture, which very much appears to be taken by the project itself, will be replaced by a city built on violence in the next decade.

The other note for the Solastalgic-Poet route is A Dance for the Burdened. The images and gifs were taken from a variety of performances and groups, explained in the order they appear in the scene:

- *PAINTED*: A dance performance related to abandoned places and urbanization
- *Makuakāne*: An Indigenous Hawai'ian dance group aiming to decolonize hula performance
- *Crested Ibises*: A Chinese ballet that combines traditional Western and Chinese dance to tell the true story of China and Japan working together to stop the extinction of the Crested Ibis.
- *Anthropocene Sculpture*: An art project by Marcus Eriksen that requires hydraulics and manual labour (biking) to power a sculpture. The two gifs were taken from the making of video.
- *The Ways We Love and the Ways We Love Better—Monumental Movement Toward Being Future Being(s)*: An outdoor dance performance by Emily Johnson that invites the audience to participate in decolonization by planting tobacco seedlings
- *Plastic Harvest*: A street dance performance by Jody Sperling with costumes made out of plastic waste.
- *Anthropocene: The Human Era*: A choose-your-own video and dance production put on by the Oxford Playhouse about the Anthropocene and fear for the future (unfortunately, no longer appears to be publicly available to play through).

All Indigenous performances were open to the general public and the images used were taken from media sites who uploaded them with permission of the performers. The audio re-uses the bowl drone that exists across all the sound in the game, plus highly-edited versions of percussive world music traditions: Irish dancing, a West African drum ensemble, and Chinese drums for a street performance.

Hanen/Scrap Keeper

Hanen is meant to represent the temperate river basins of the world, and reflects the rise of agriculture and industry in its history.

The picture of Hanen's capital is Manchester, which was chosen due to its status as arguably the first industrialized city in the world. The recording in the city is actually of a PA system in Shanghai. Shanghai is one of the top 20 polluted cities as of this writing. The recording was partially chosen for where it was recorded and the general eeriness the PA system's distorted recording added to the game. The factory soundscape was a recording from a factory in South America. Otherwise, the audiovisual material was taken from temperate zones such as Oregon (the recording) and Germany (the farm and field pictures). I think Hanen and Ravaaga contain the images most familiar to Western Canadian audiences.

Ravaaga/Archaeo Futurist

Ravaaga represents the colder continental and boreal climates of the world, as well as unique ecoregions in higher altitudes.

The main soundscape is a field recording in the Andes in Peru. The soundscape in the mines is simply a collection of sounds related to radiation and industry, such as a Geiger counter. A noteworthy image in Ravaaga is the building chosen for the museum, which is the Buzludhza Monument in Bulgaria. This building is currently a crumbling monument to the futurist architecture of European Communist states, and there are also plans to turn it into a proper heritage site in order to preserve it (Buzludhza Monument, 2024). It felt like a fitting representation of the Museum of Progress, since it was meant to envision the future and yet is mostly abandoned. I also added an image of the Athabasca Glacier, as it has been slowly melting due to climate change and is a much closer problem to us here in Edmonton than some of the environments in the other routes.

Ravaaga also has images of extraction pulled from stock photography and Canadian "Anthropocene" photographer Edward Burtynsky. The bead in the Archaeo Futurist's route is from a larger project called *Fossil Necklace* by artist Katie Paterson. Paterson's work focuses on deep time and *Fossil Necklace* is a series of beads made out of material formed from the Pre-Cambrian Era to now. The bead used for this project, based on Paterson's website, is one of the Pre-Cambrian ones. I would have used a Pleistocene one but Paterson's website appears to be missing a few images of the beads in the necklace and it is difficult to tell which one is which from the chart.

A note on languages

As mentioned, there was originally an intention to have the fictional worldbuilding be much more prominent in the project, including forcing my friends and family to read out constructed language scripts. This was unfortunately scrapped. However, I will share some brief notes on them since my sister, a linguist and speech pathologist, worked hard to help with them:

Haneni:

This language has a strict and limited vowel system, but more consonants than any of the other languages. It follows an SOV (Subject-Object-Verb) structure and requires extra grammar particles for marking each, which means that one could technically change the SOV structure to emphasize one part of the phrase over the other. It is notable for having both /th/ noises in English, which are fairly rare phonemes in the grand scheme of real-world languages.

Majaatli:

This language differentiates between short and long vowels (as seen in Majaatli), and the /tl/ is pronounced similar to the /l/ sounds heard in Welsh and certain Nahuatl dialects. Because it was a language originally made for oral storytelling, it was meant to sound very musical; words are conjugated by changing or repeating the vowel sounds, like in Tagalog. It also follows a vowel harmony system like in Hungarian (that is, only certain vowels, based on their pronunciation, are allowed to be next to each other). I did not force my friends to learn this language for the spoken recordings because it is too dissimilar from English and the other languages my friends speak (and none of them are trained orators or readers of the International Phonetic Alphabet).

Àndāzī:

Àndāzī is actually a tonal language, but Twine doesn't play nice with diacritics in its coding so it is usually spelt as "Andazi" in the game to avoid messing up certain variables. Àndāzī is also a very musical language; it has three simple tones (high, neutral, low), no unvoiced consonants, and allows for the initial consonant clusters of /nd/ and /mb/ seen in many Bantu languages. This makes it sound very warm and rhythmic when spoken, but unfortunately there ended up being no spoken parts related to it.

Ravaagan:

Ravaagan also differentiates between short and long vowels, and is the opposite of Haneni in that it has a very extensive vowel inventory as well as diphthong (combined vowel) inventory. Its vowel system is most similar to Finno-Uralic languages, but Sámi languages in particular. English speakers would most likely think it looks close to Elvish because Tolkien also took inspiration from this language tree. It works a bit like German and Cree in the sense that it is very easy to come up with one giant and complex word through its conjugation system. You can see a small example of it when you view the pamphlet at the mountain community centre as the Eco Orator.

Appendix A: Audio Materials

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