

UNIVERSITY OF
Southampton

Telling Tales: Hypertext Writing Part 2

COMP3220 Web Infrastructure

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Ludic Hypertext

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jamesrbowe/4001776922/>

Ludic Narrative

Game + Story ... but what's in a game?

Different forms of play:

- Competition (agon)
- Chance (alea)
- Simulation (mimicry)
- Disorientation (ilinx)

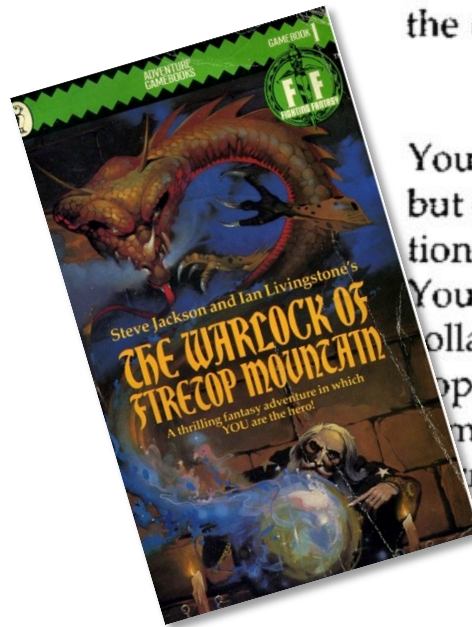
Different types of play:

- Structured, explicit rules (ludus)
- Unstructured, spontaneous (paidia)

Fighting Fantasy (1982-)

Combines CYOA-style second person narrative with Dungeons & Dragons-style rules

- Non-linear story
- Numbered paragraphs (more finely-grained narrative)
- Mixture of explicit and random choices (aleatory reading)
- External state (hit points, inventory, etc)



21

The green blood of the dead Orcs smells foul as it seeps from their bodies. You step around the corpses and investigate the chest. It is a sturdy affair, made of strong oak and iron, and it is firmly locked. You may try to smash the lock with your sword (turn to 339) or leave it alone and go through the open door (turn to 293).

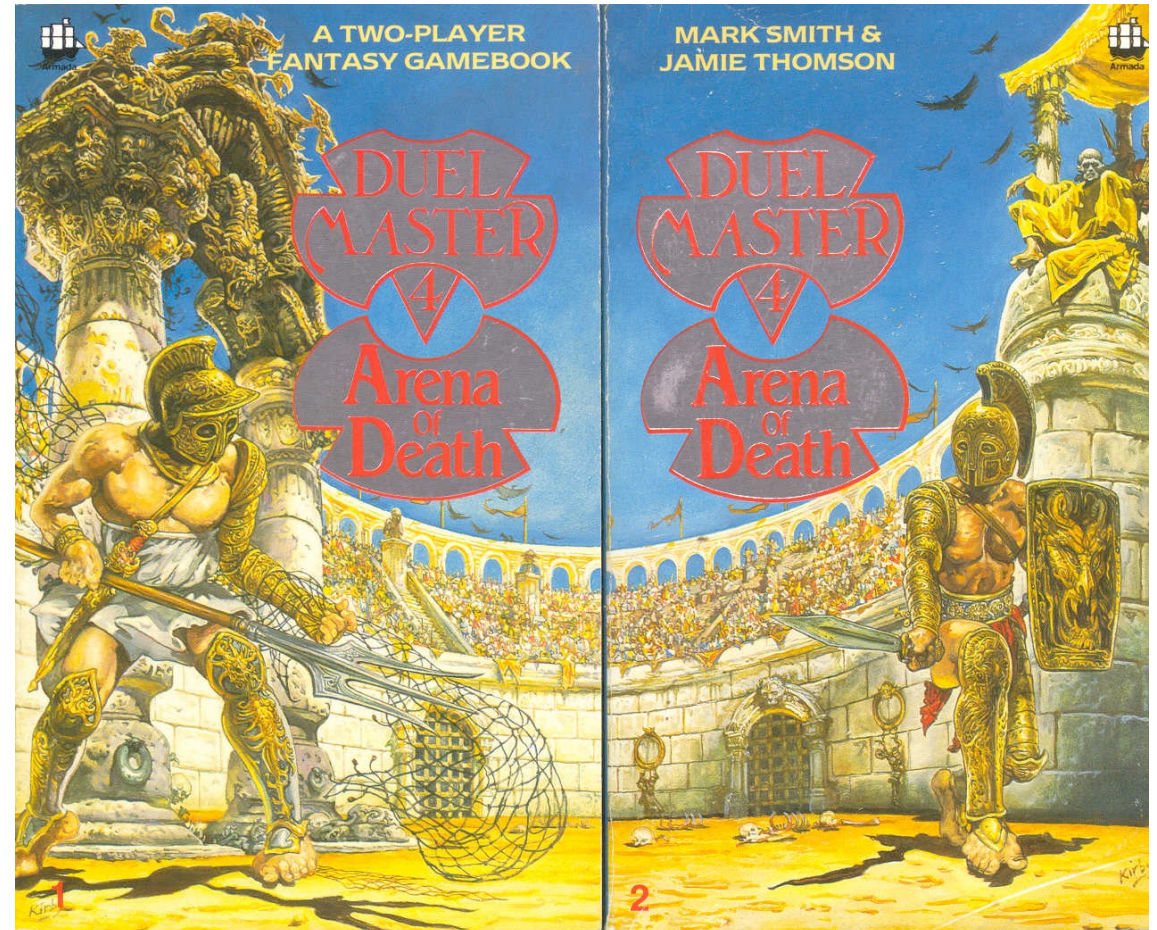
22

You poke around looking for signs of secret doors but can find none. You pause to ponder your situation and a small jet of gas hisses from the ceiling. You cough and choke to clear your lungs, but collapse to your knees. Your head spins and you flop to the floor in an unconscious heap. When you come to, you look around in an unfamiliar place. Turn to 4.

Duel Master (1986-7)

Two-player gamebook (agon)

- Non-linear story
- Split across two paired books (even/odd numbered lexia)
- Shared state and synchronization (keywords, WAIT)
- Mixture of explicit and random choices (aleatory reading)

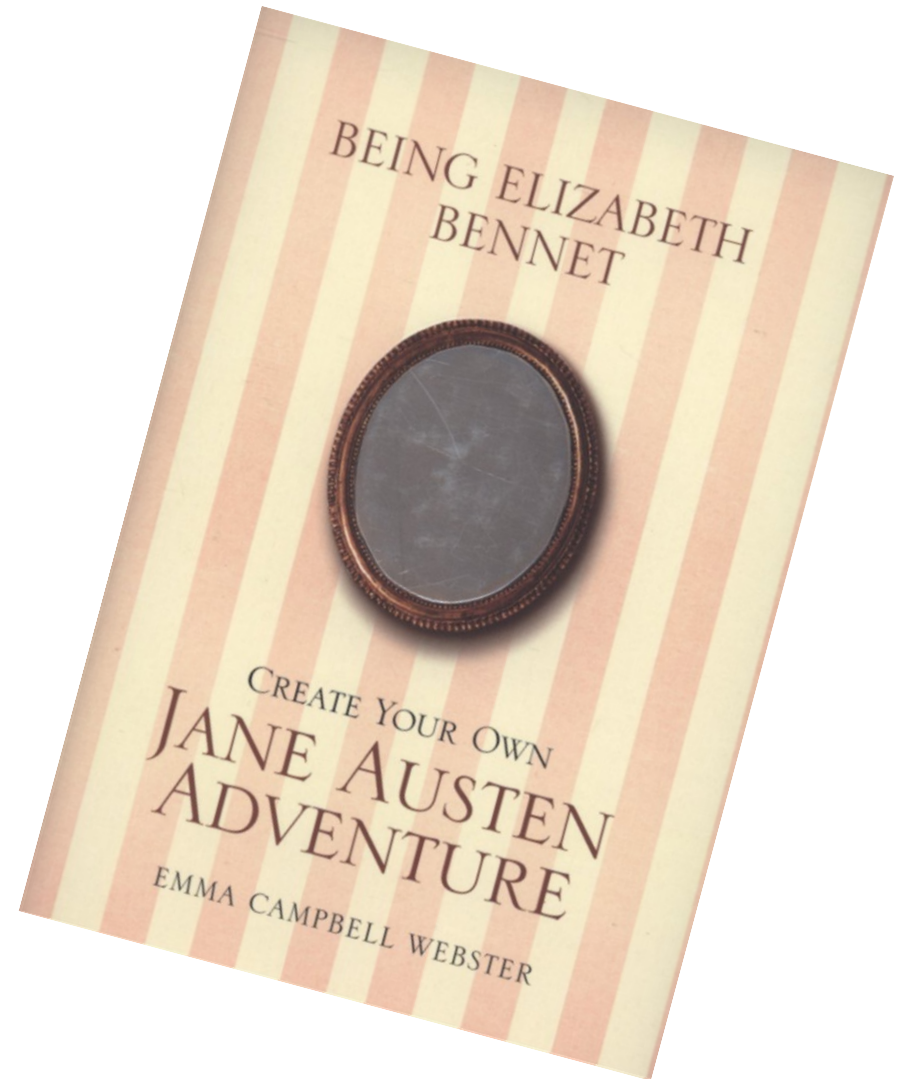


Being Elizabeth Bennet (2007)

Second person narrative

- Again, non-linear story
- Simple rules
- No aleatory aspects

Mimicry aimed at a different demographic to that of other gamebooks!



Dark Cults (1983)

Storytelling card game

- Story assembled from random selection of text fragments (alea)
- Aim is to improvise a narrative around the story

Integral competition (agon)

- Play alternates between players (Life and Death)
- Scores assigned to different card types for each player

Rules ensure well-formed stories

- Card types limit which cards may be played next

Dark Cults (1983)



Card Shark

- A Card Shark node (or card) contains some text, typically a brief, focused passage
- Each card may also specify constraints on the context in which it may appear
- Reader receives seven random cards, based on constraints chooses which card to visit next, repeats
- Social Shark: collaborative, competitive reading
 - Readers take it in turns to play cards
 - Points awarded to readers for the playing of particular cards

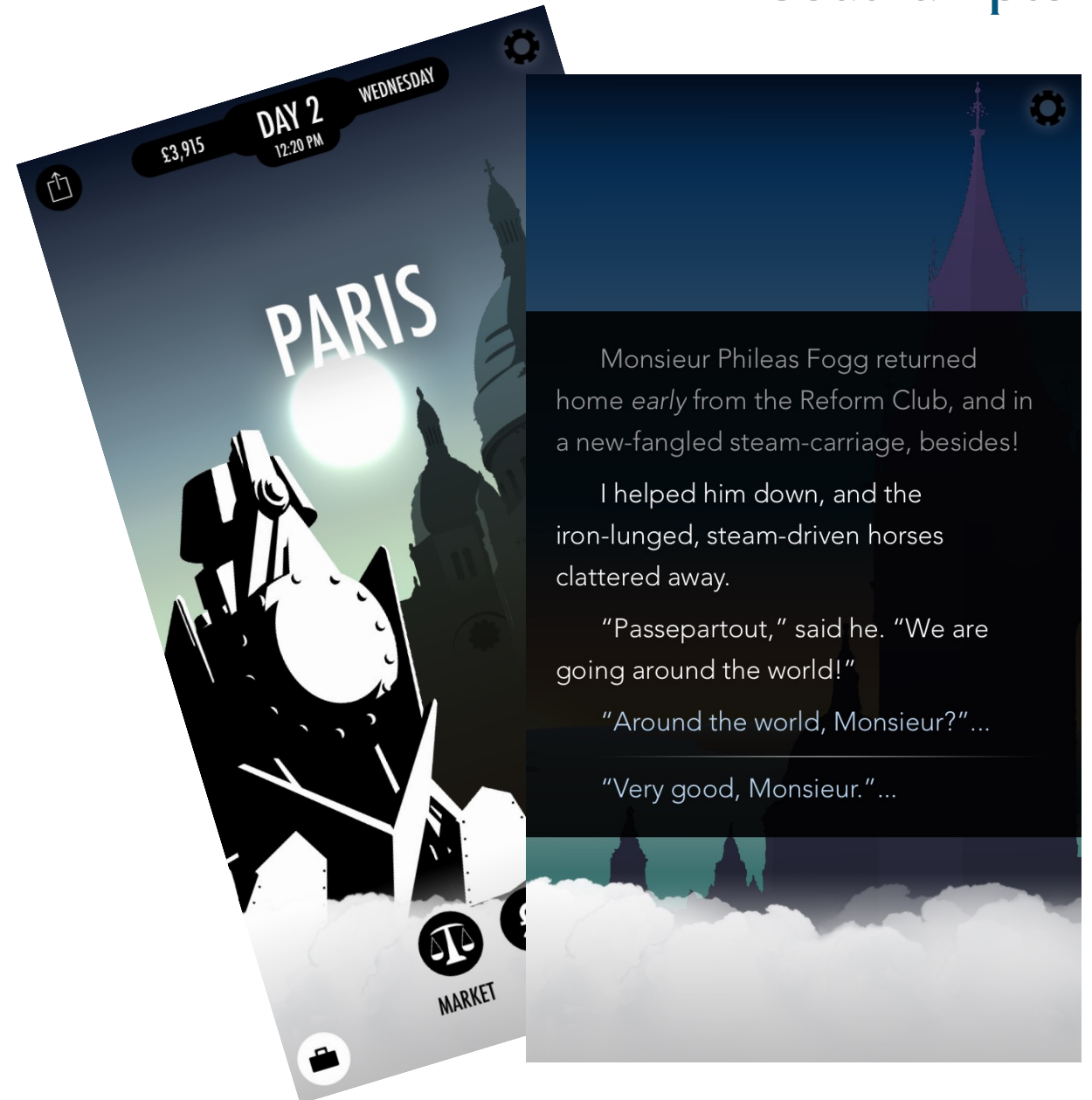
80 Days

Second person narrative

- Non-linear story
- Fine-grained lexia (short paragraphs)
- No aleatory aspects

Some overlap between interactive fiction and (ludic) hypertext fiction

- In general, interactive fiction presents a less constrained choice to the reader (80 Days is an interactive fiction outlier)



A close-up photograph of a comic book page. The image shows a character's face on the right side, rendered in a bold, stylized manner. The character has a yellow face with black outlines for the eyes and a red mouth. The background is filled with various patterns and colors, including a blue and white patterned area and a yellow and red patterned area. The overall style is reminiscent of classic comic book art.

Hypertext Comics

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dolmansaxlil/5606944557/>

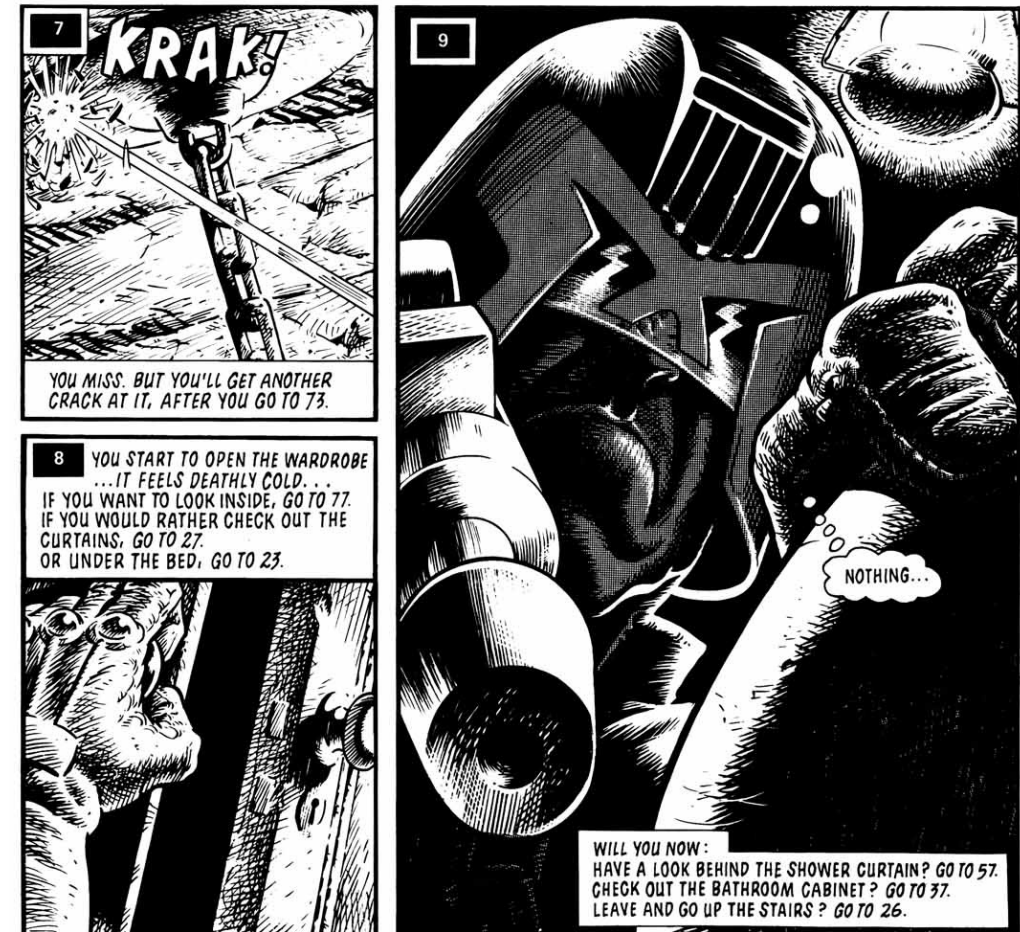
Hypercomics (1986-)

Early hypertext comics based on gamebooks

- Dice Man 1-5 (1986)
- You are Maggie Thatcher (1987)

Typically second person narrative

- Numbered frames/pages
- Explicit choices in captions
- Ludic elements

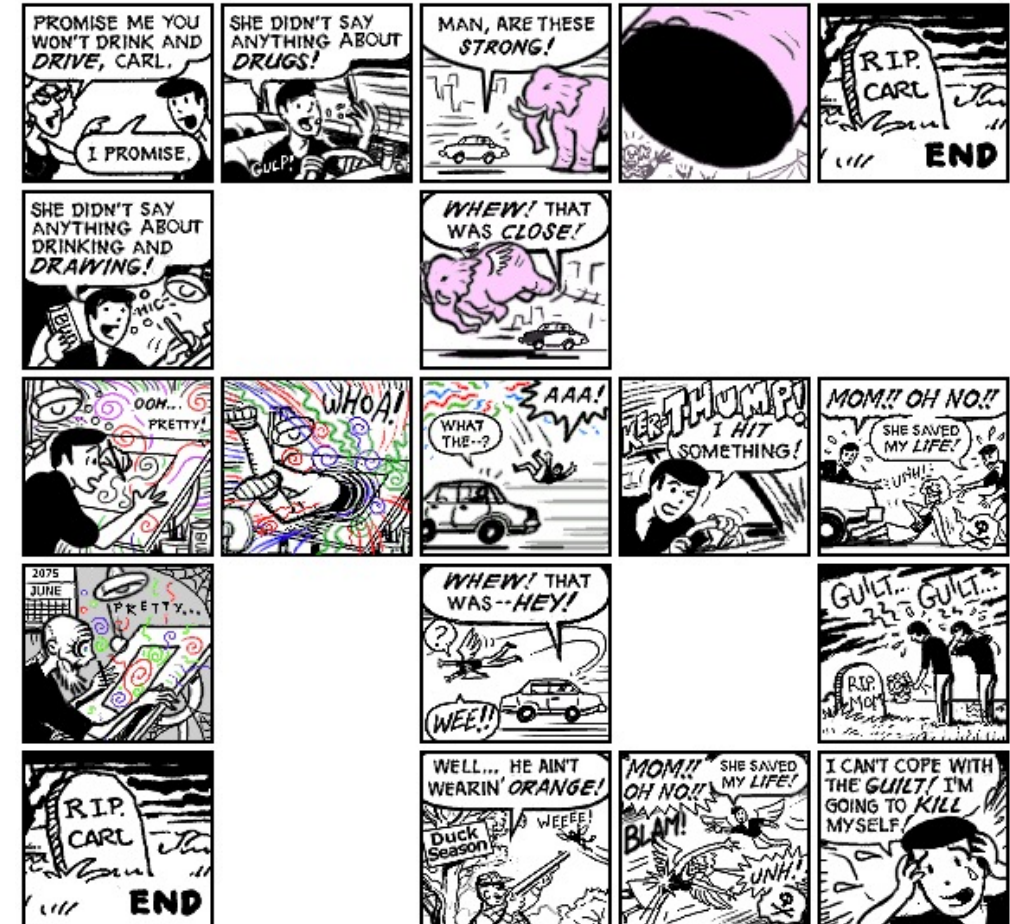


Carl (2001)

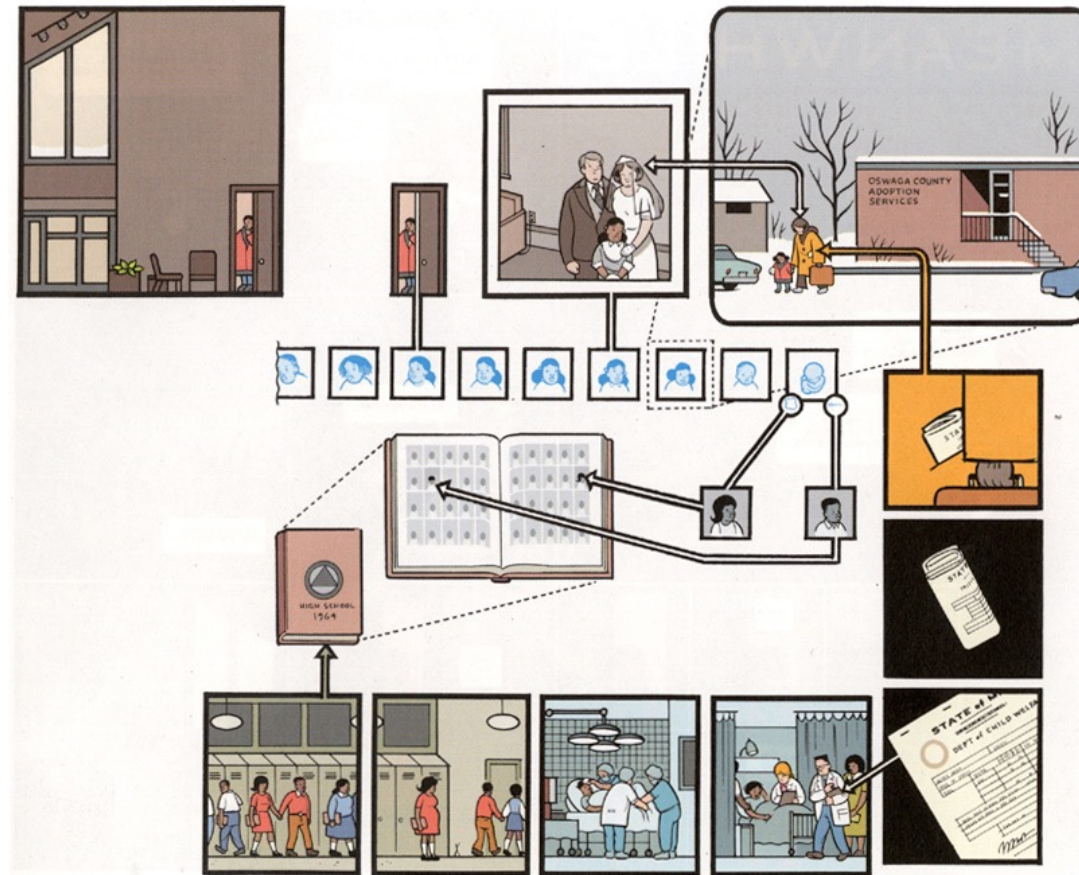
Implicit choices in alternate frames

- Relies on left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading conventions
- Spatial juxtaposition of frames on the printed page permits multiple reading paths

Examined by Scott McCloud in
Understanding Comics

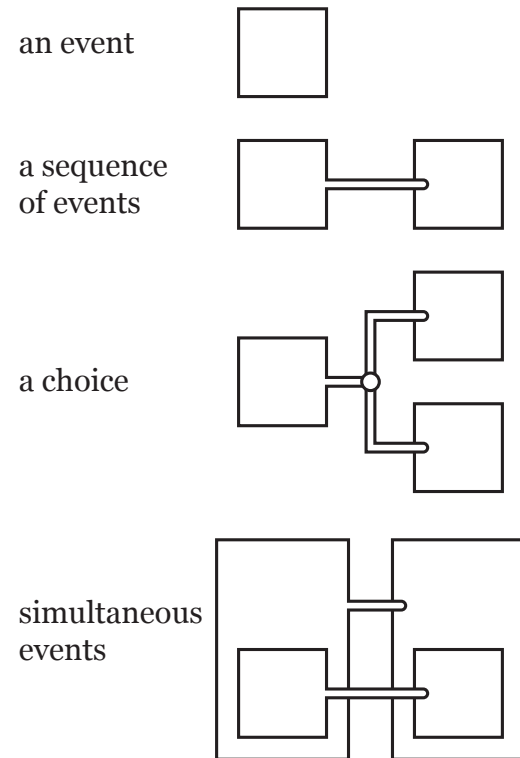


Jimmy Corrigan (2001)

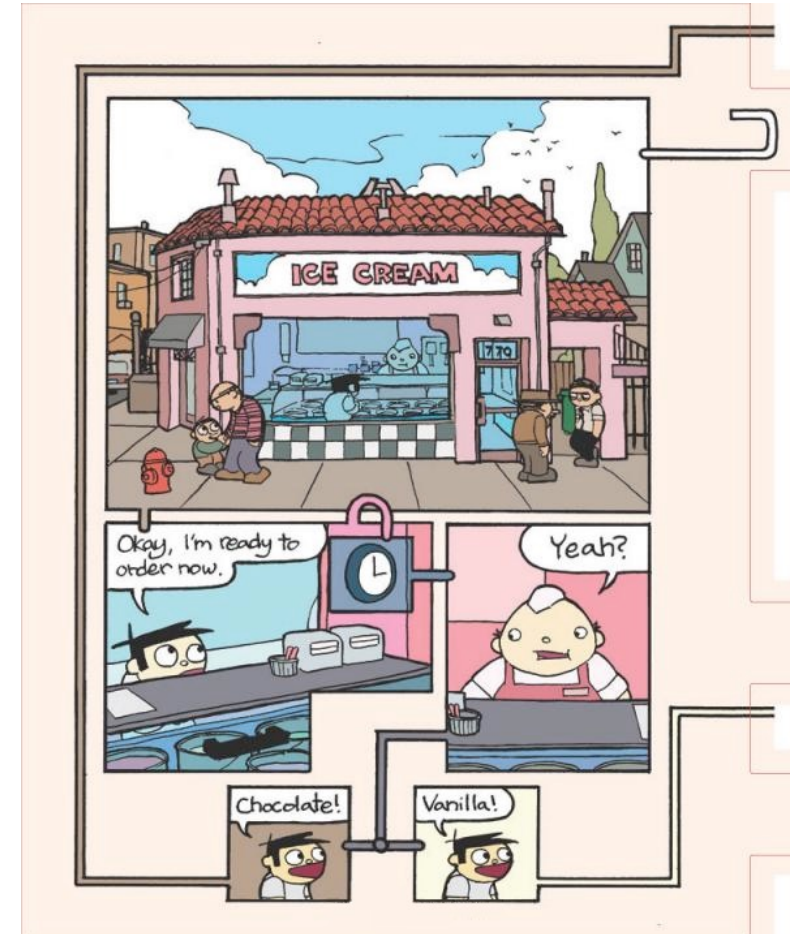


Meanwhile (2010)

Visual grammar for linking:



Tabs for inter-page navigation





Hypertext Poetry

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/rossap/4160004956/>

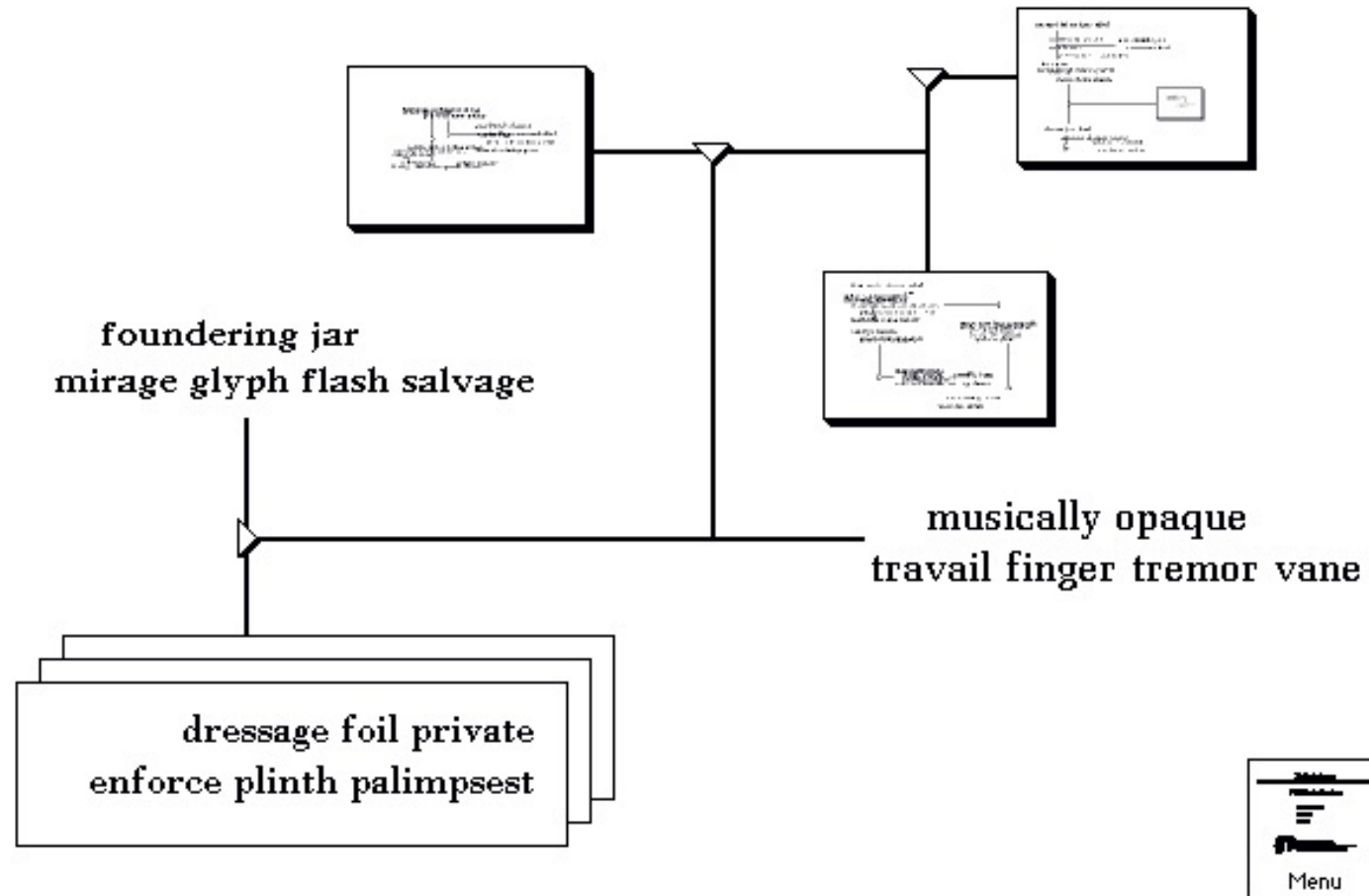
Cent Mille Milliards De Poèmes (1961)

Book of sonnets

- Each of the fourteen lines is printed on a separate strip
- 10 alternatives for each line
- Reader chooses which of the ten alternatives to read for each line
- $10^{14} = 100,000,000,000,000$ poems



Hypertext Poetry



A circular yellow sign with the words "STAGE DOOR" written in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. The sign is suspended from a curved metal hook that is attached to a vertical metal post. The background is a solid, bright blue color.

**STAGE
DOOR**

Hypertext Drama

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/slimjim/2169745303/>

Drama vs. Hyperdrama

Traditional drama:

- presents the playwright's (and director's) preferred account (narrative) of a story
- distinguishes between on-stage and off-stage

Hyperdrama:

- allows the audience to follow different narratives (and to choose when to switch narratives)
- continues action off-stage

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1966)

Additional narrative centred on minor characters in Hamlet

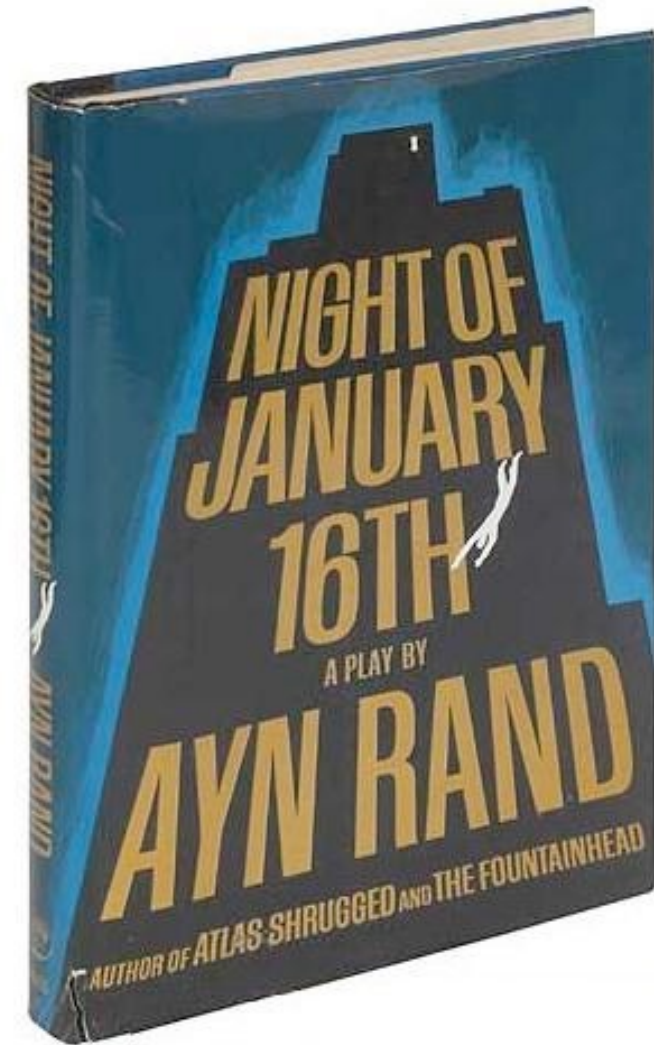
- Non-ergodic, therefore not hyperdrama
- Intertextual - in semiotic terms, Hamlet is the hypotext and R&G is the hypertext



Night of January 16th (1935)

Courtroom drama by Ayn Rand, centred on a murder trial

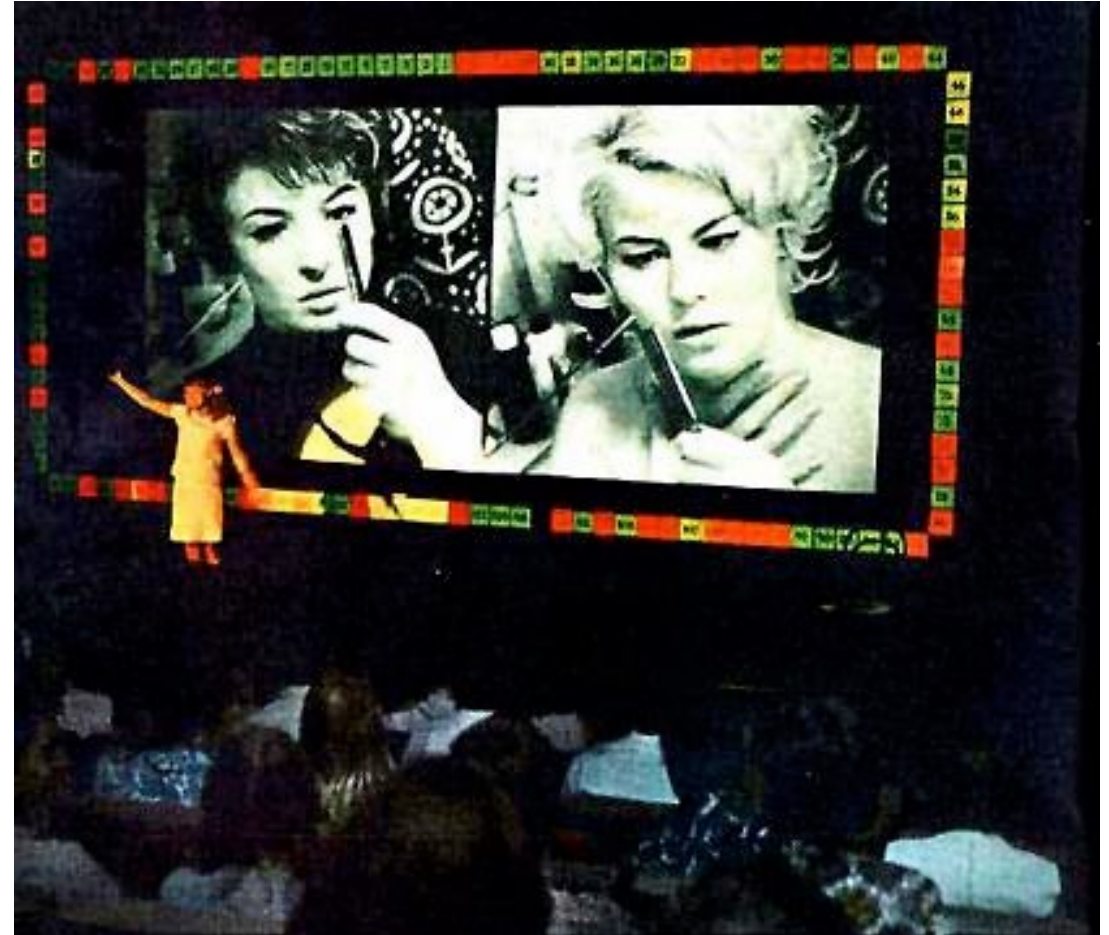
- Members of the audience are selected to form a jury
- The jury's verdict determines the ending of the play (ergodic)



Kinoautomat (1967)

Czech experimental interactive film

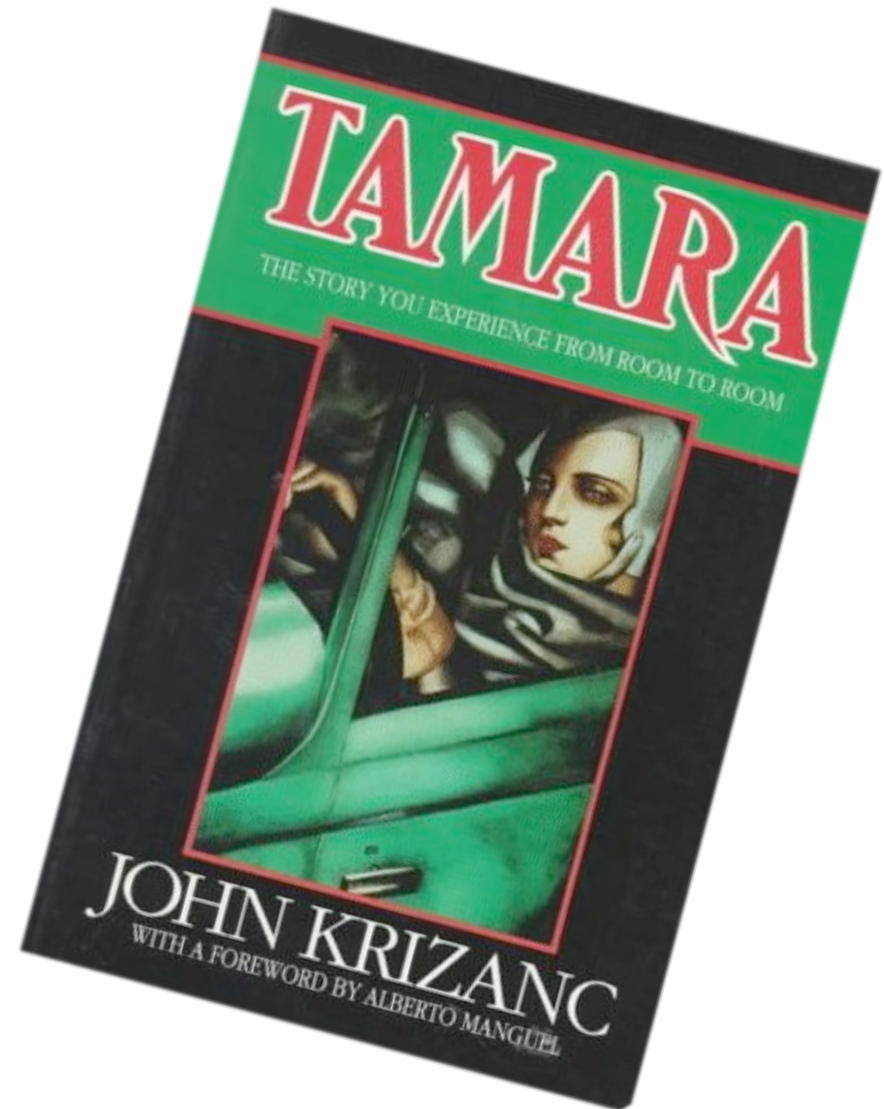
- First shown at Expo 67 in Montreal
- Film is stopped at intervals and audience is asked how they think the film should be continued
- Audience votes on two options (red/green) with the majority determining the future path of the film (ergodic)



Tamara (1981)

Play takes place in a large house

- Actors perform simultaneously in up to nine different rooms
- Spectators must choose which actor(s) they follow (ergodic)
- Multiple narratives



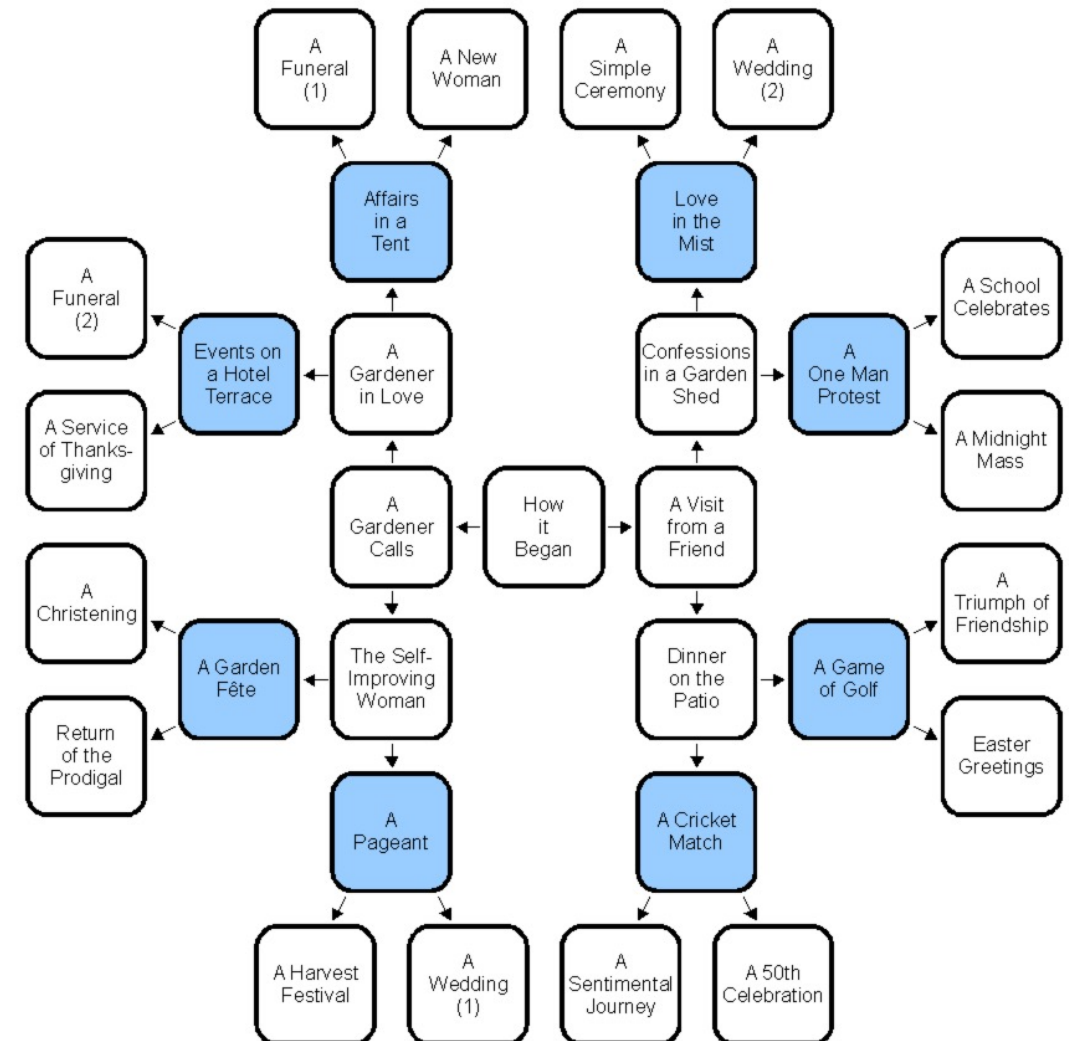
Intimate Exchanges (1982)

Group of eight stories originating from an opening scene

- Two actors play all of the roles in the play
- Story repeatedly splits in two
- Sixteen possible endings
- Non-linear story

The actors choose which path to take at each split, not the audience

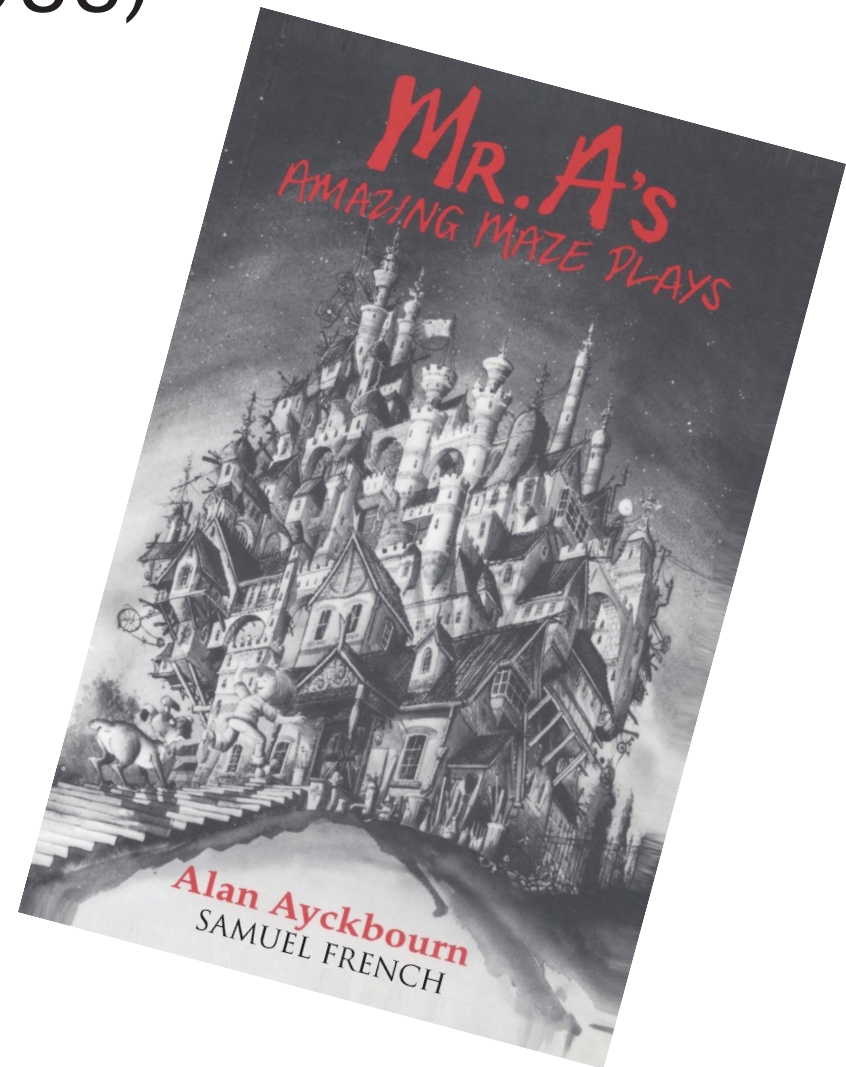
- Non-linear, but not conventionally ergodic!



Mr A's Amazing Maze Plays (1988)

Children's play in which the main characters (a young girl and her dog) explore a deserted house

- Main characters take directions from the audience (ergodic)
- 30 locations in the house, not all of which are visited in a single performance
- Non-linear story



Timecode (2000)

Film composed of four overlapping narratives

- Filmed simultaneously as four continuous 90-minute takes
- Screen divided into quarters, all four films projected at same time
- Audience 'choose' which sub-film to watch (ergodic)



Puss in Book (2017)

Interactive children's film from the Shrek franchise

- Film broken up into a series of episodes
- Binary choice presented at the end of each episode



Black Mirror: Bandersnatch (2018)

Interactive film written by Charlie Brooker

- Repeated binary choices throughout film



Summary

Non-linearity is the essence of hypertext

- Hypertext fiction may be non-linear in story, narrative or text
- Non-linearity may equally apply to poetry, comics, film and drama

Hypertext is also ergodic

- Non-trivial effort typically manifests itself as choice
- May also involve ludic elements

Next Lecture: Web Graph