



Software Aesthetics

Mark Bernstein
www.eastgate.com





ÆSTHETICS?

The very idea of
“software aesthetics”
seems improbable.

Aesthetics?



The Bolter Test

Reading in the bed

Reading in the tub

Reading after the apocalypse
(Eco)

Not for display



Aesthetics?




What if the screen itself is not beautiful?

- stone is not malleable
- linseed oil smells
- what could be less probable than grand opera?



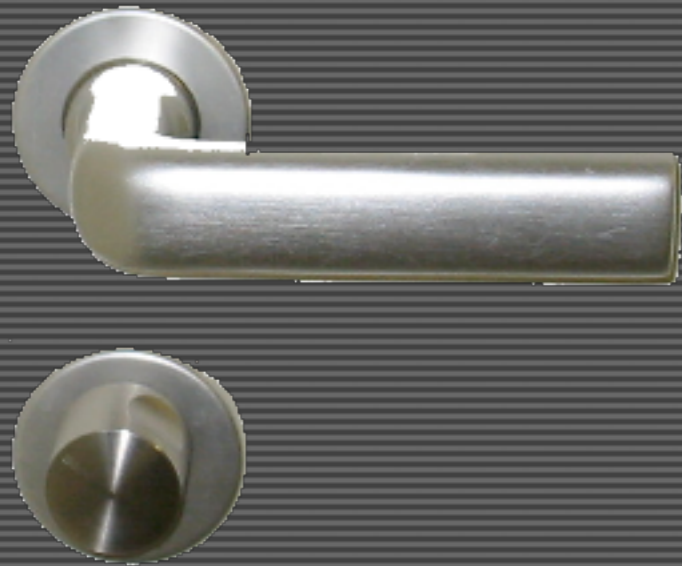
Why Not?

on the ghost in the machine



The future of serious writing clearly lies on the screen;
if we treasure ideas, we should not hide.

The ultimate aim of
all creative activity is
a web site!



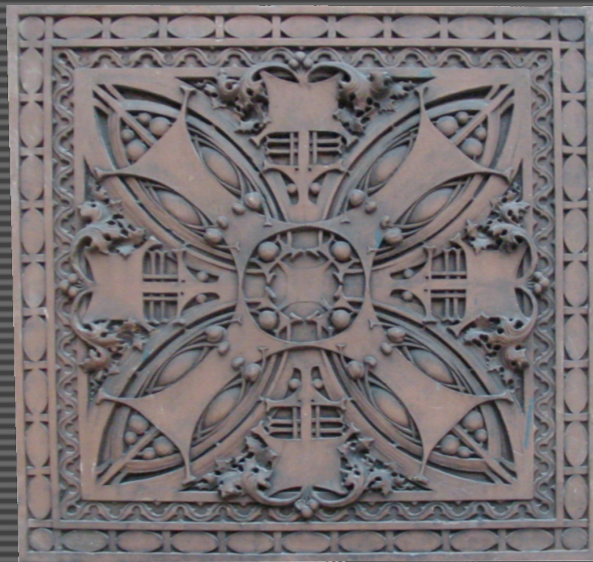
*Das Endziel aller bildnerischen
Tätigkeit ist der Bau!*

— Walter Gropius

Doorknob from I. G. Farben HQ,
Frankfurt. Peter Behrens, 1920-25.
Photo: Anja Rau

Louis Sullivan, terra cotta panel for fire control

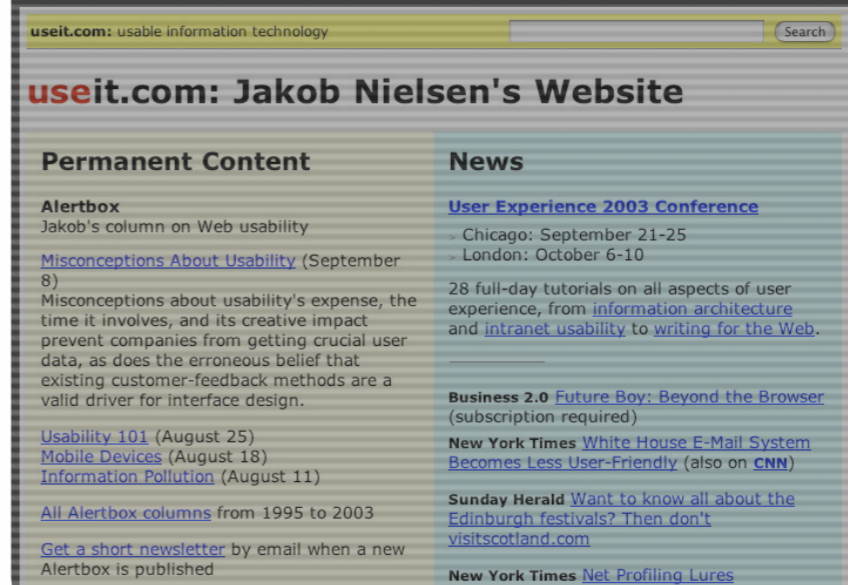
Reconciling the forces of Art and Engineering



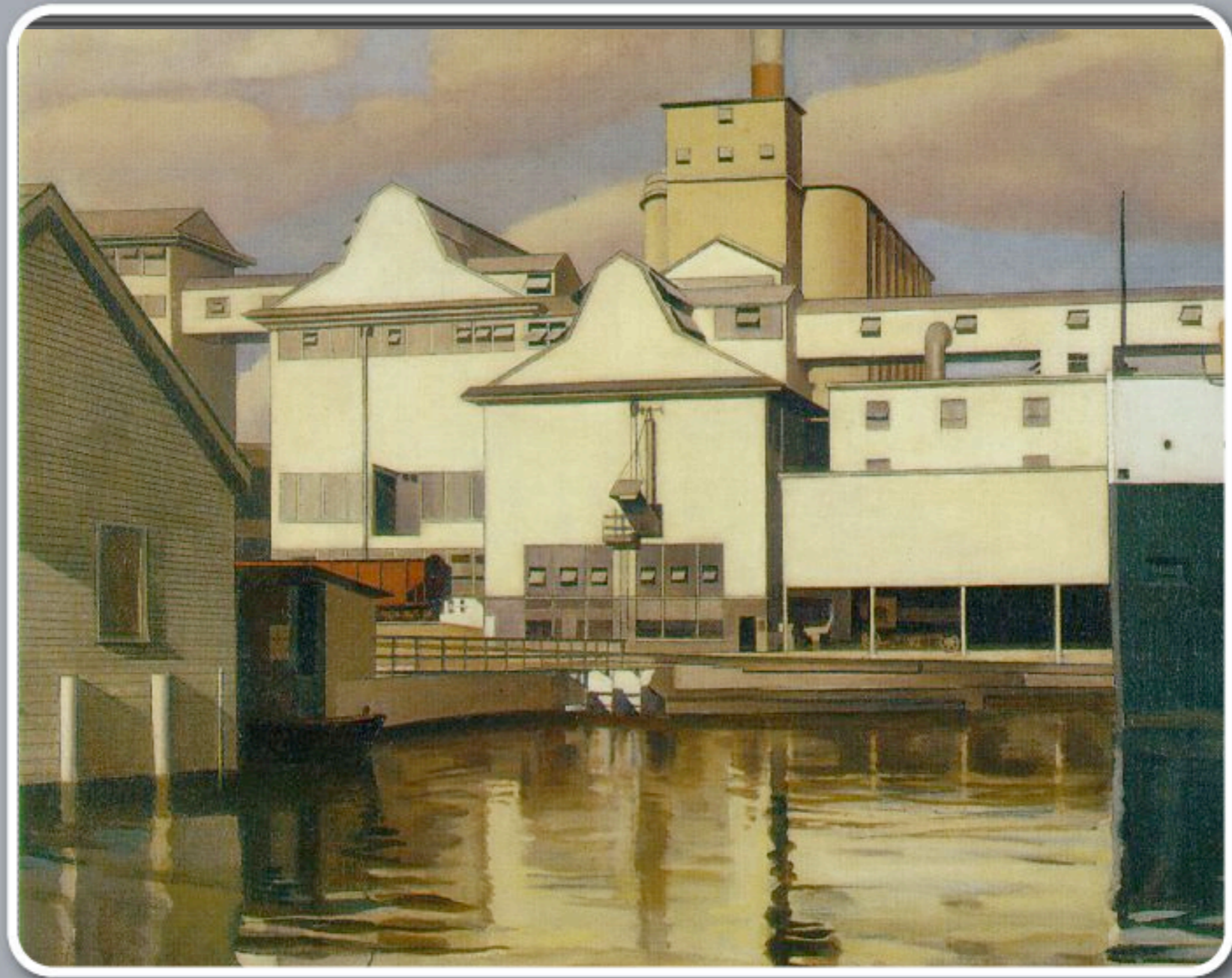
ARCHITECTURE

Jakob Nielsen, useit.com

Taming the Creatives



INFORMATION
ARCHITECTURE



Charles Sheeler, River Rouge Plant, 1932 Whitney Museum of Art, NY

The New Machine Age

the achievement of modernism

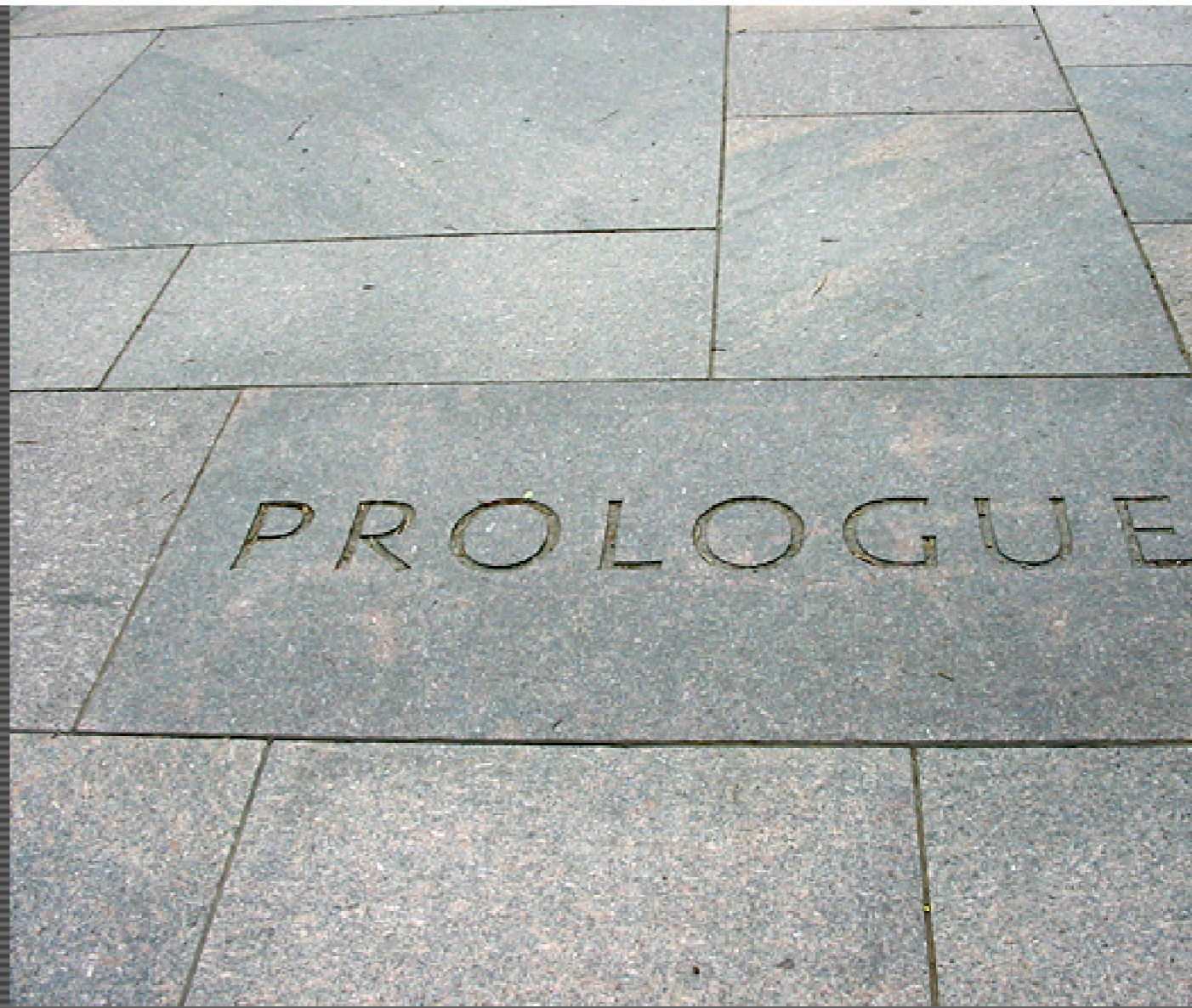
Because



The subject is not the subject

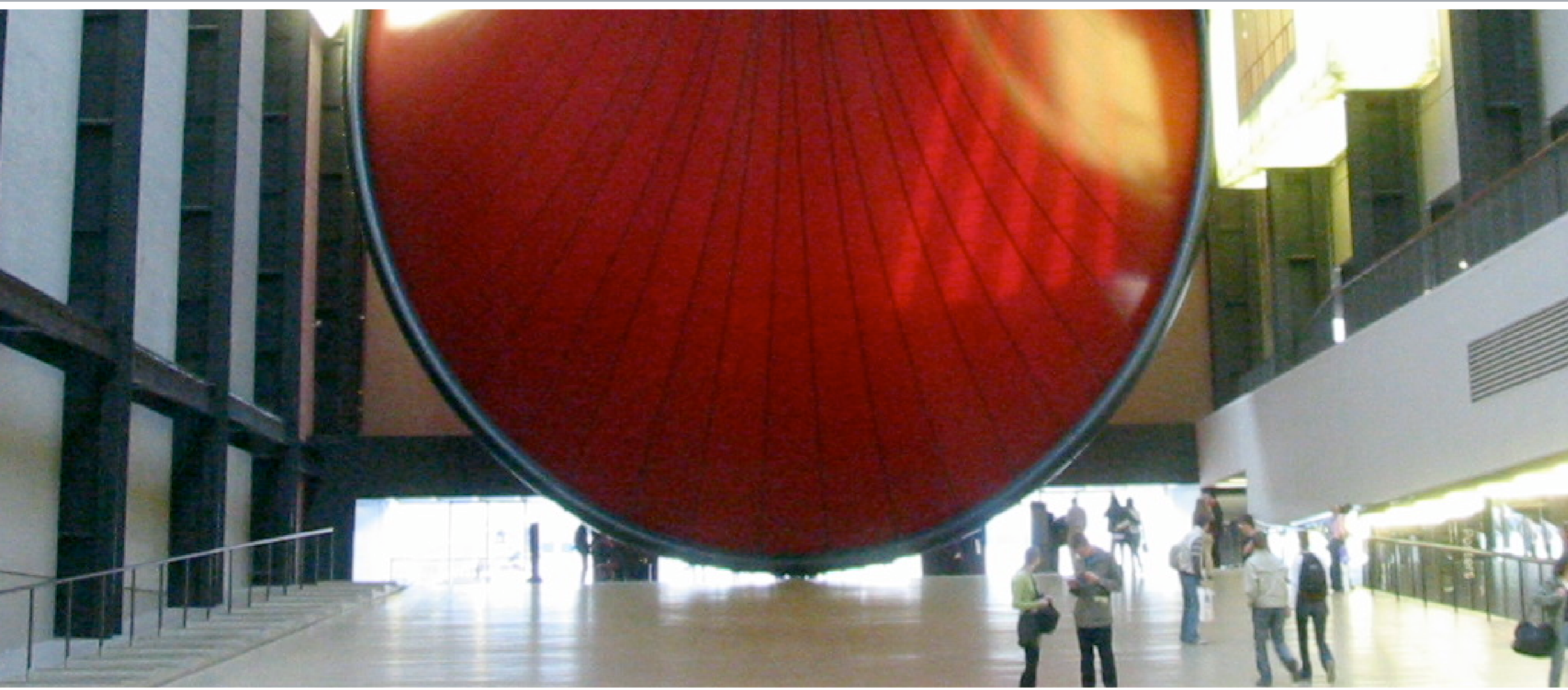


Marcel Duchamp, ruota di bicicletta, 1913



FDR Memorial, Washington DC

Not in museums

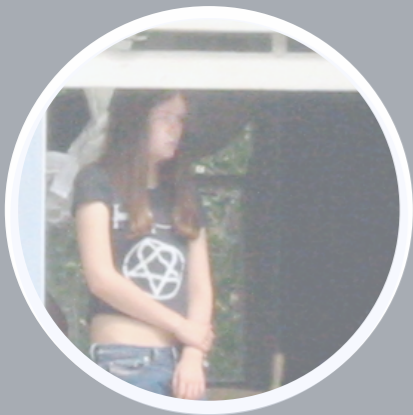


Anish Kapoor, **Marsyas**, Tate Modern, 2003

Not polished gems...



Zakim Bridge, Boston



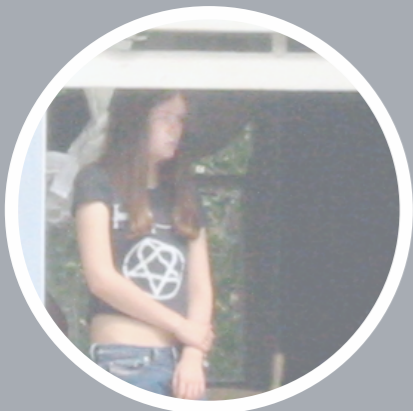
CARE AND CRAFT

machine-age aesthetics

Not polished gems...

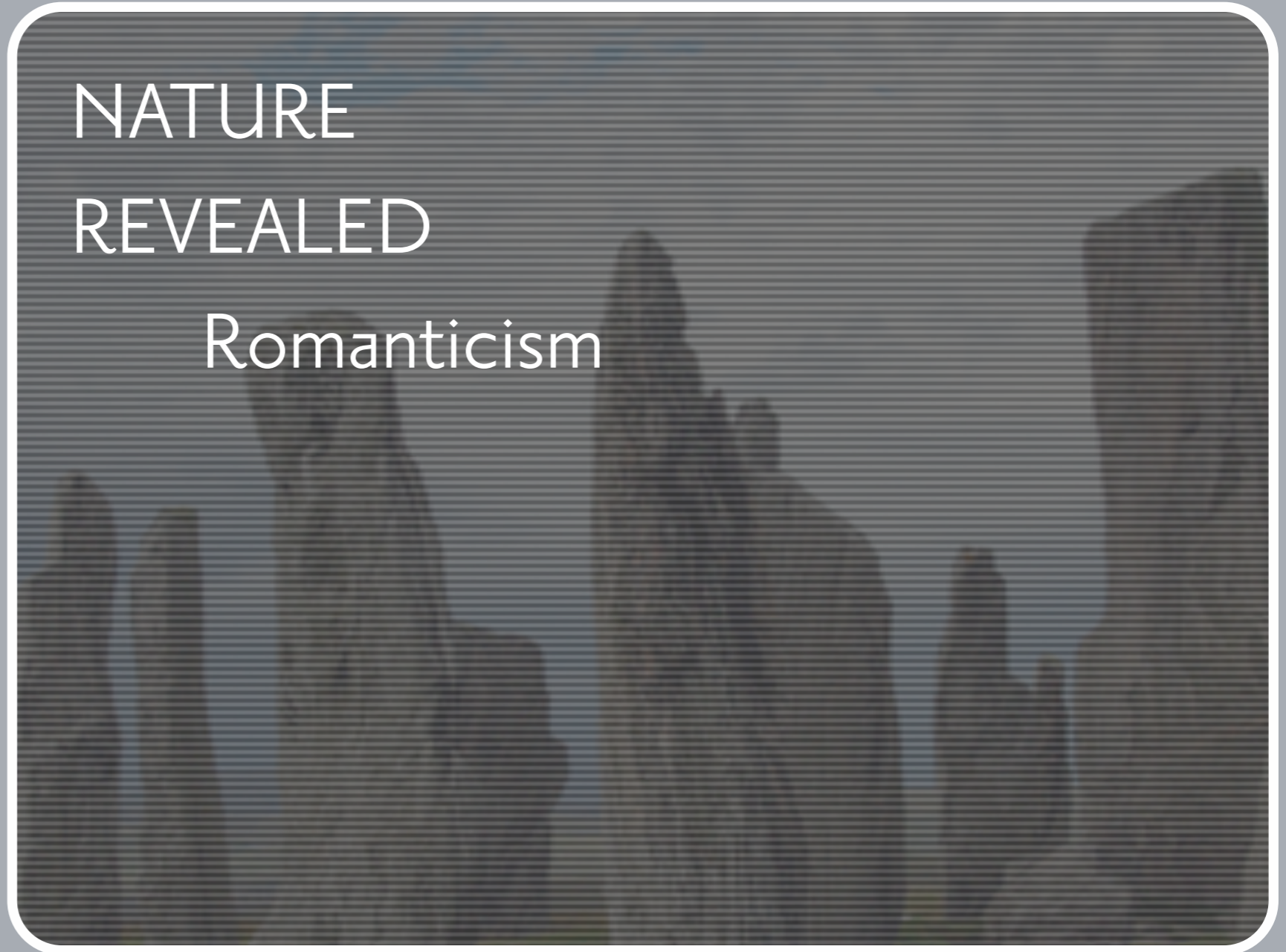


Callanish, Isle of Lewis

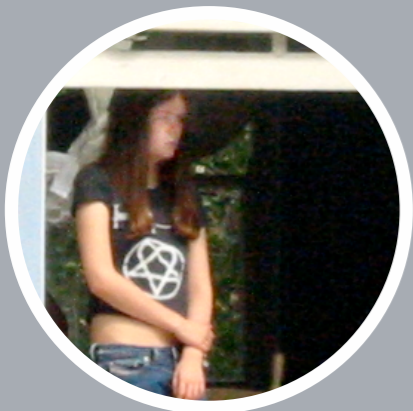


NATURE
REVEALED

Romanticism



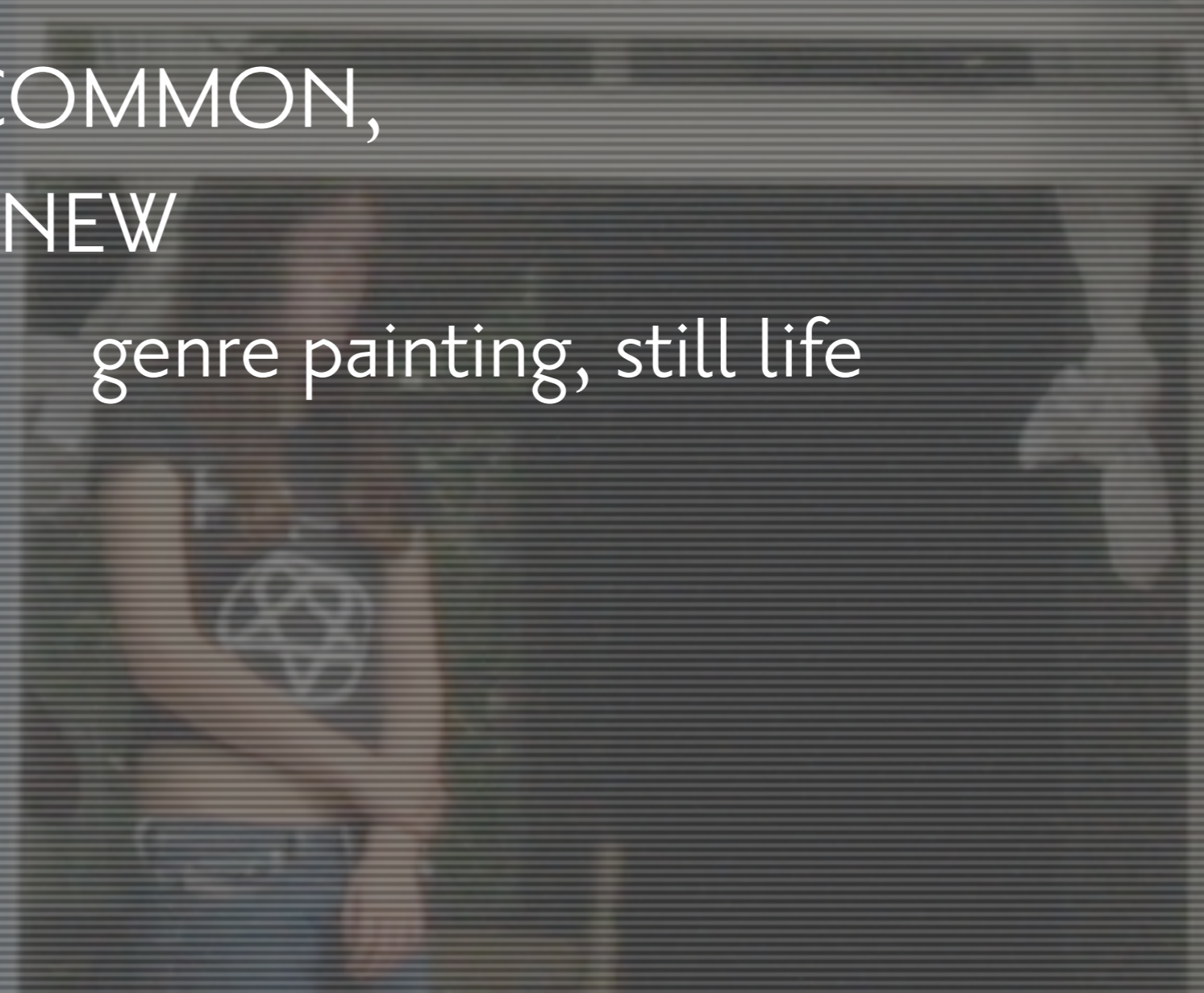
Not polished gems...



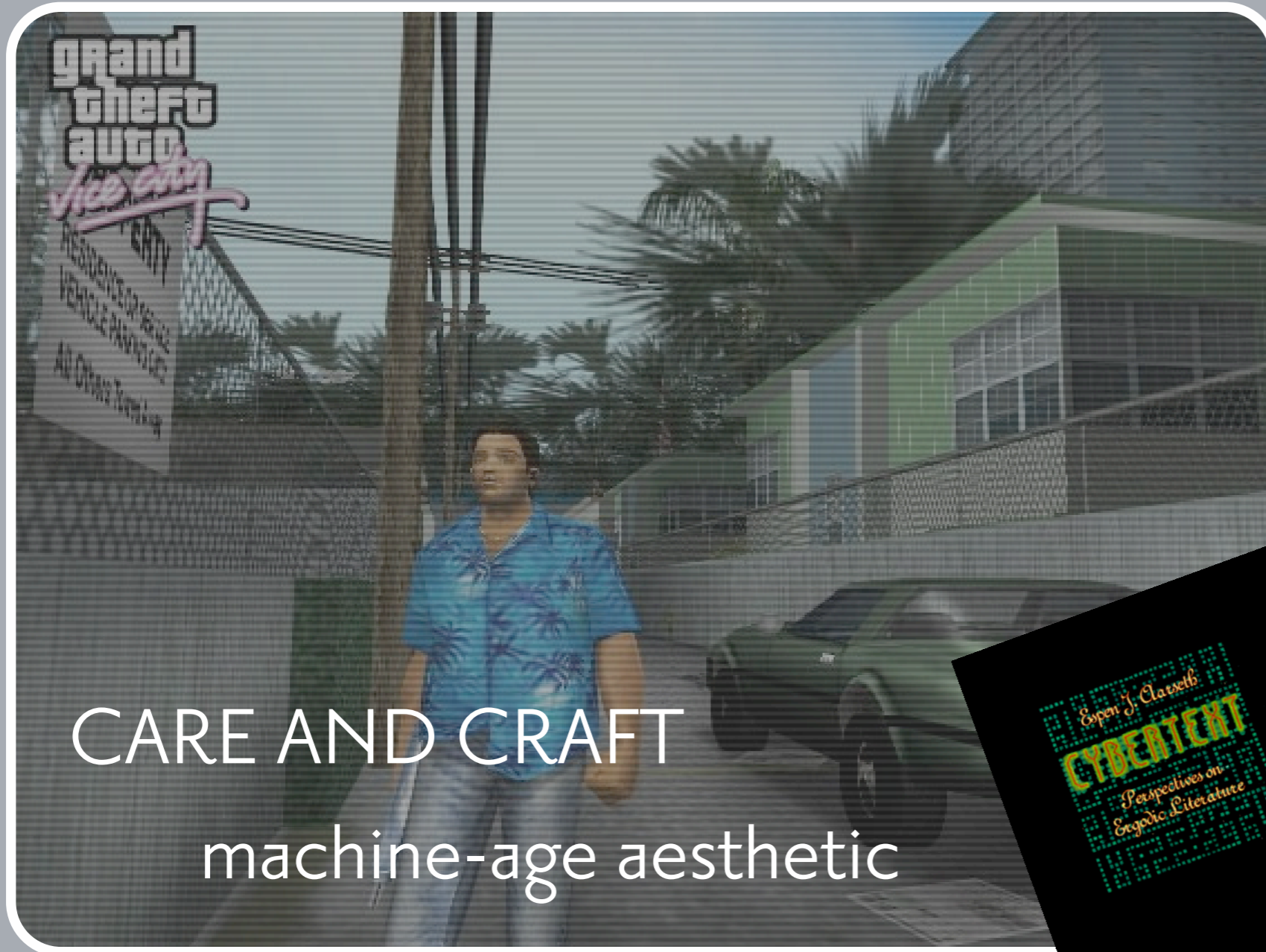
Notting Hill Carnival, 2003

COMMON,
ANEW

genre painting, still life



...but wood notes wild

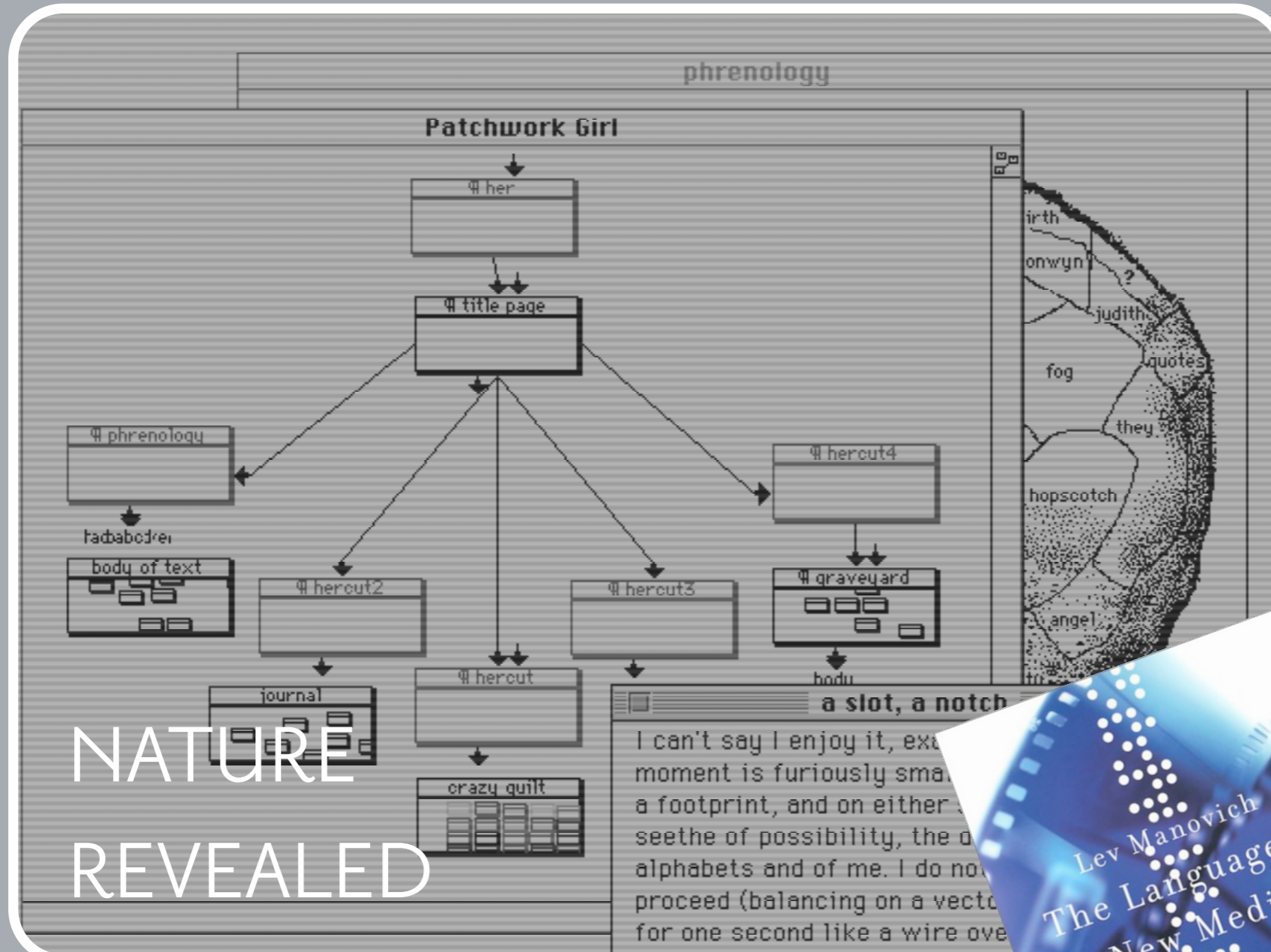


CARE AND CRAFT
machine-age aesthetic

Grand Theft Auto 2: Vice City



...but wood notes wild



NATURE
REVEALED

Shelley Jackson, *Patchwork Girl*
Romanticism

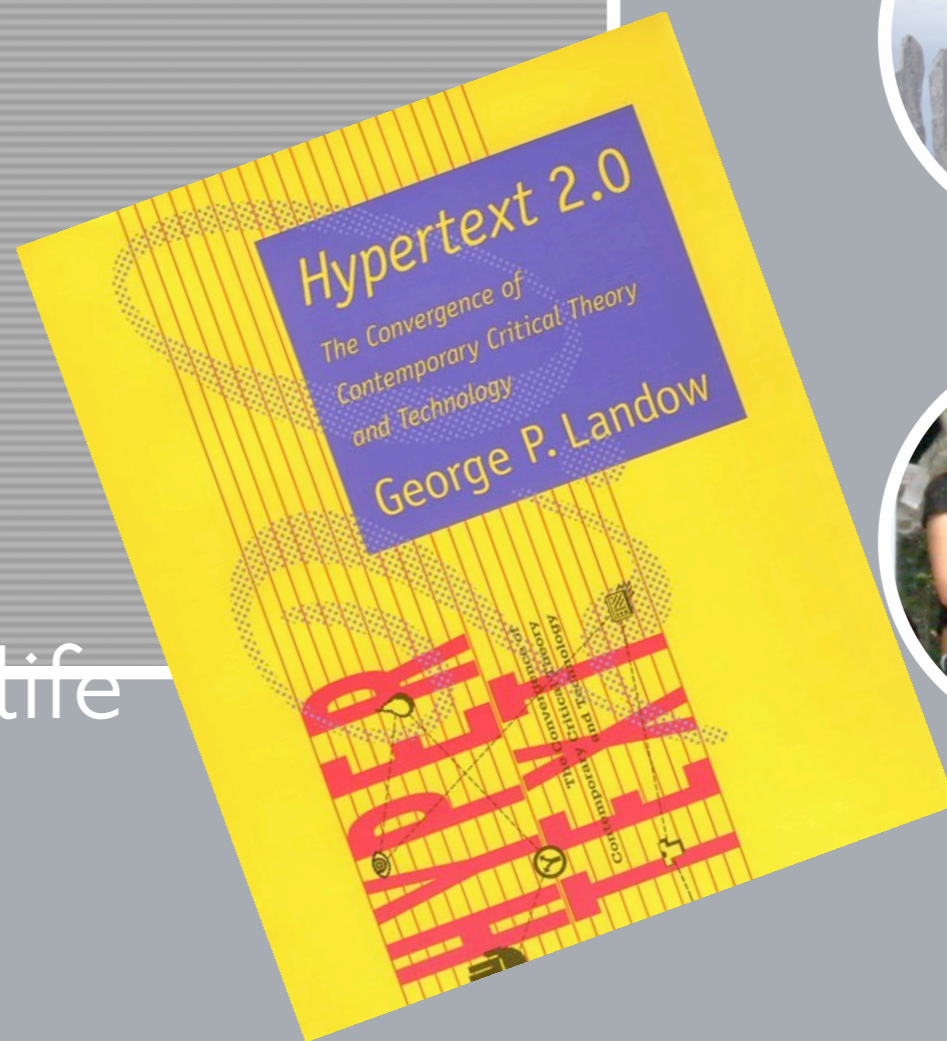


...but wood notes wild

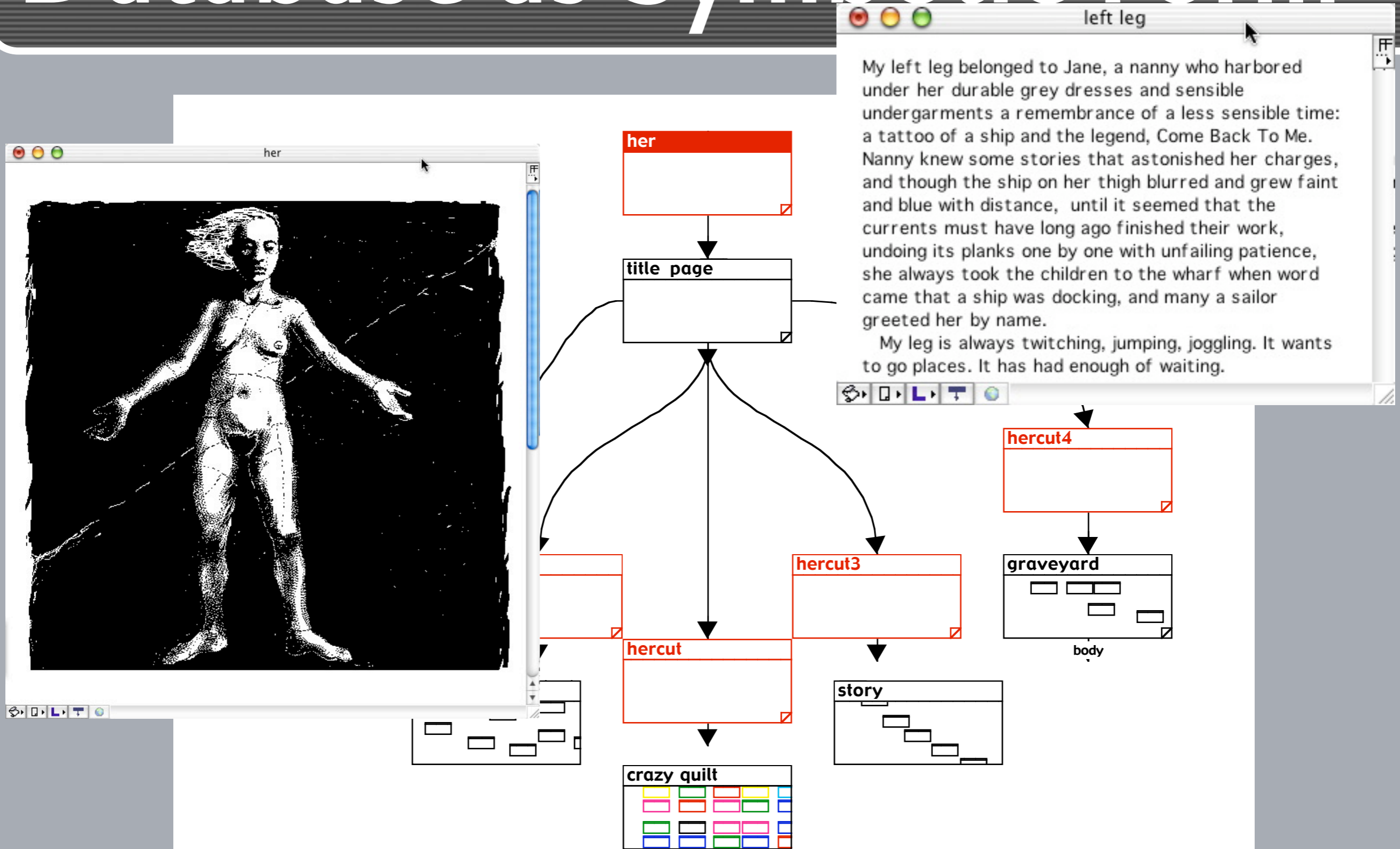
“I want to say that I may have
seen my son die this morning.”

COMMON,
ANEW

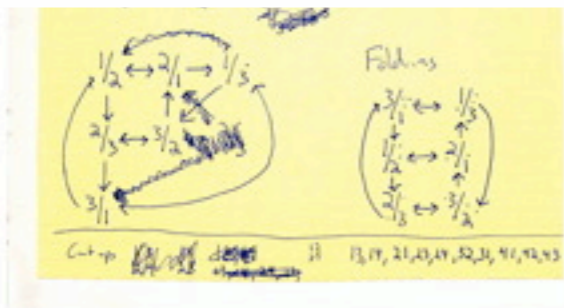
Michael Joyce, *afternoon, a story* genre painting, still life



Database as Symbolic Form



a typewriter, a knife...and a girl



both clothed and naked and again. I don't know where she is or home. I asked for what I thought the kisses to love. Our first kiss was one told me I had made a mistake. I would like to play with passion and me anyway with a bag of clothes a mad innocent.

We smiled all the way to the sides.

She dressed and undressed tongues. It was research for a novel outside and in her car circling as I my main character was about to kiss.

--from *Fugue*, fold-in section 1.3.1



What all this means:
Four sections: Prelude, Fold-ins, Cut-ups and Code
Prelude → written after Fold-ins and Cut-ups, as a piece suggestive of the confusion wrought by Fold-ins and Cut-ups.
Perhaps a careful student? Or a student? Or just a single screen with lots. Spreads out like after.

--from *Fugue*, fold-in section 3.2.2

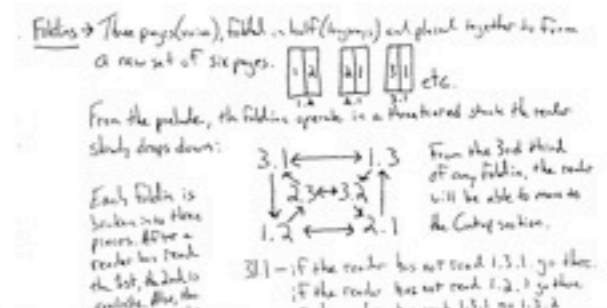
It started with a typewriter and a knife... and a girl. Always a girl, I guess.

She cataloged her favorite I would never have allowed when her ecstasies offering her past as shy friend knew it all but don't hollow of my mattress letting my came was doing for me.

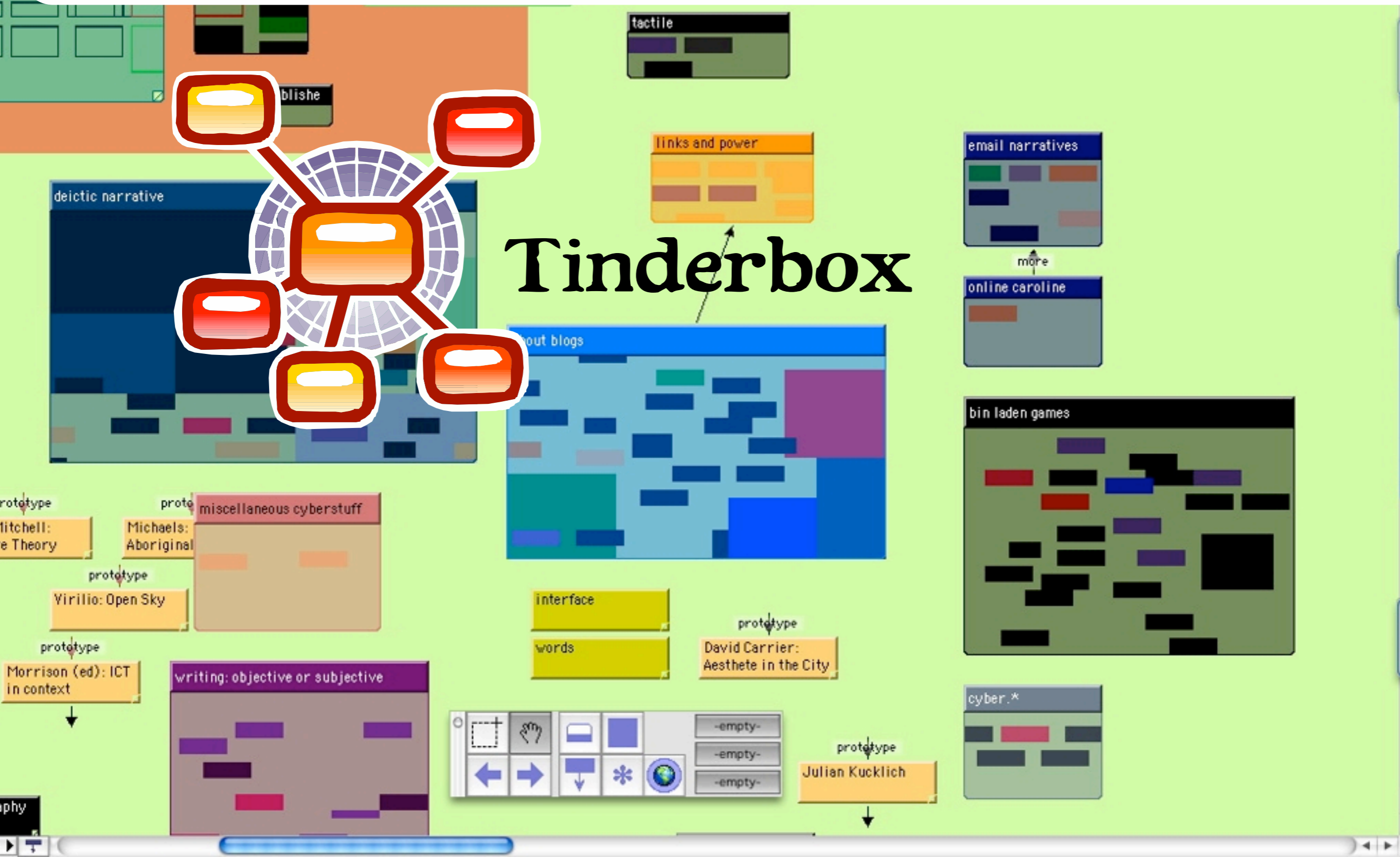
I'm sure she didn't dance her thighs her small breasts together squeezing a hug into panties covering her hand working mound as she lay on the floor naked feeling the muscles in her pelvis loosely together. A remembered come in my arms shouting release into sure it was for me.

She dressed in whine of camera flash subsiding and catch place as she covered her body wet and undeveloped on the bed beside and haloed by dusty amber light.

--from *Fugue*, fold-in section 2.3.3

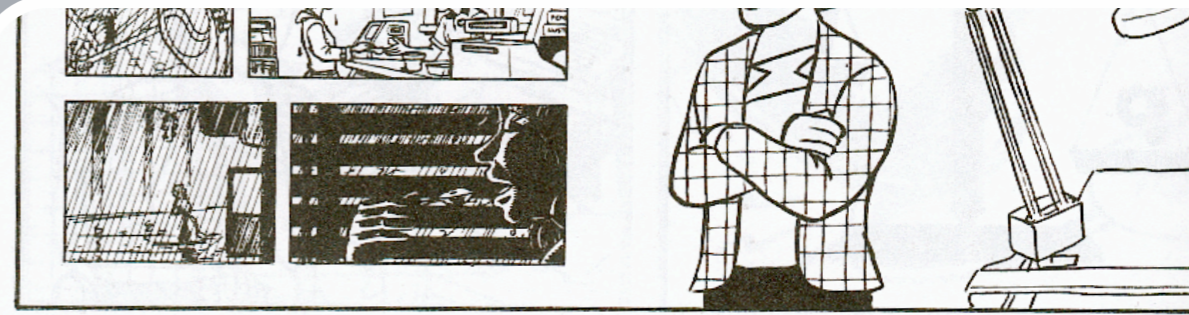


Spatial Hypertext

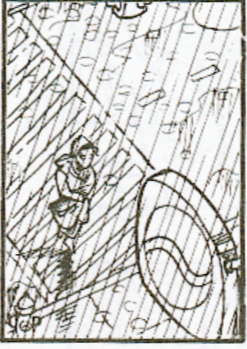


Link / Cut

A succession of images juxtaposed so that the contrast between these images moves the story forward in the mind of the audience.



I MAY BE ALONE LIKE THIS FOR A VERY LONG TIME.




IT COULD BECOME AN *INTERNAL MONOLOGUE.*

(INTERDEPENDENT)


PERHAPS SOMETHING WILDLY *INCONGRUOUS*

"MISSION CONTROL, MISSION CONTROL, DO YOU READ ME?"



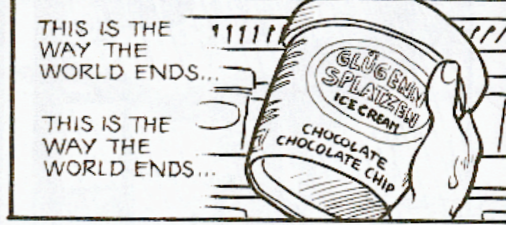
(PARALLEL)

MAYBE IT'S ALL JUST A BIG *ADVERTISEMENT!*



(INTERDEPENDENT)

OR A CHANCE TO RUMINATE ON *BROADER TOPICS.*



THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS...
THIS IS THE WAY THE WORLD ENDS...

(INTERDEPENDENT)

eNarrative Everywhere

FEATURES DOWNLOAD PURCHASE SUPPORT CONTACT

In this story, we learn about the product. We try it, and we like it. We buy it. Then, after we've bought it, we need support. And then, at the very end, we have a way to contact the company.

The natural inference, alas, is that **support** follows **purchase** because something has gone terribly wrong, and **contact** is our last hope of getting satisfaction after **support** has failed.

(**Support** must have failed, not only because **support** is the kind of *schlemiel* who always fails, but also because it fits the plot: if support succeeded, who would we need to **contact**?)

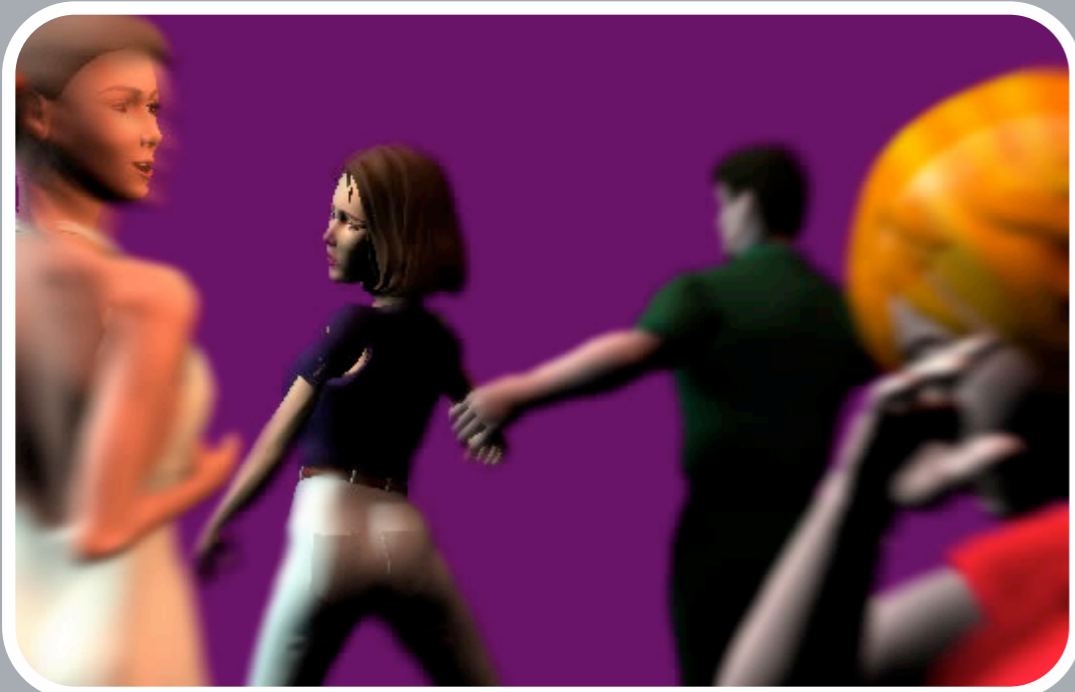
Mark Bernstein, **eNarrative Everywhere**

A List Apart, April 2001



Michal Huisman, Bear Pit Monument,
Maastricht 2001 (photo MB)

Immersive?



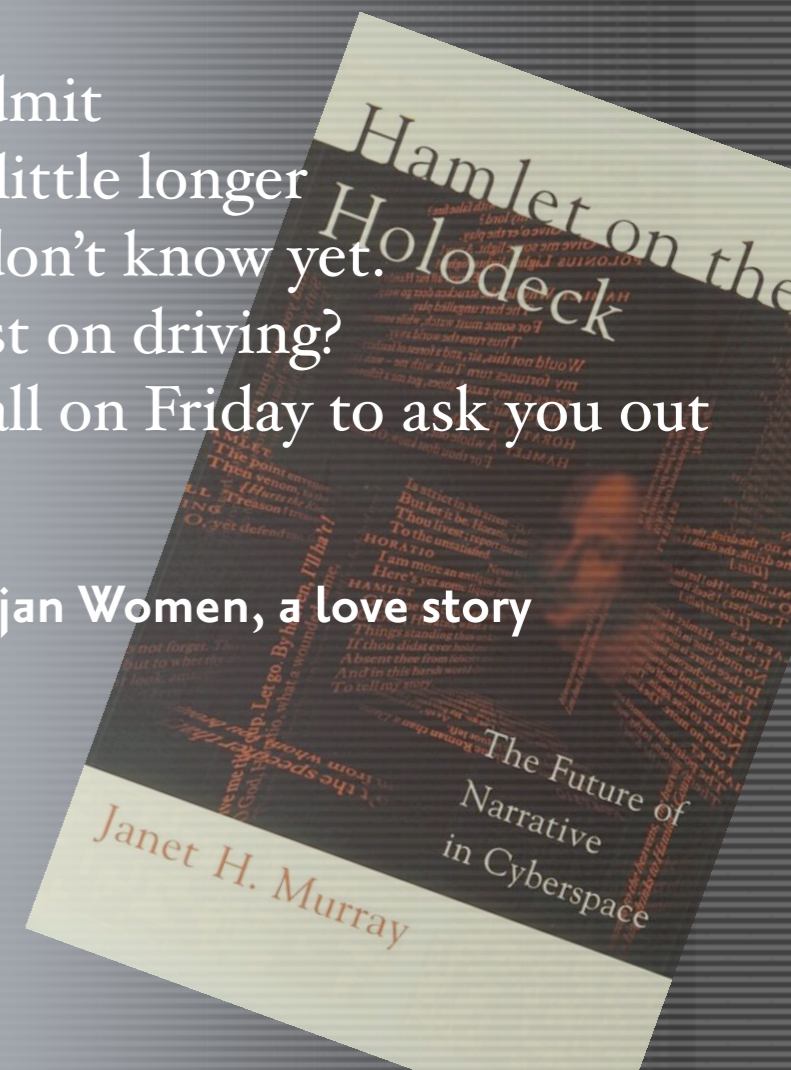
from *Card Shark and Thespis*, Hypertext '01 Proceedings



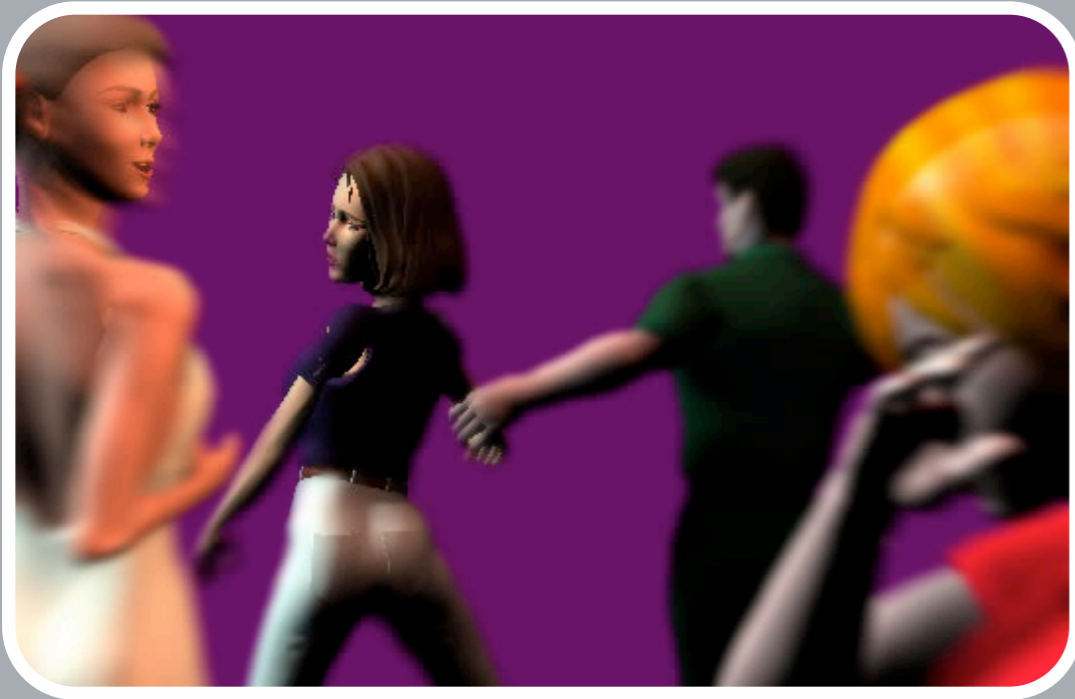
But when it's in your numbers
or your horoscope
you just know
that's the way the world was
when you had your life
and you accept it.

Of course, I have to admit
I'd have liked to live a little longer
I mean there's a lot I don't know yet.
Like: why do guys insist on driving?
And how come they call on Friday to ask you out
for Friday night?

Charles Mee, *The Trojan Women, a love story*



Immersive?



Of course, I have to admit
I'd have liked to live a little longer
I mean there's a lot I don't know yet.
Like: why do guys insist on driving?





Those Kids!

“Parental fears of what children might see on the Internet are very peculiar, considering what children can see on the walls in public restrooms.”

–Theodor Holm Nelson

Short attention?



● **BABYLON 5:** a single, 100-hour film, meant to be viewed over the course of five years

● **BUFFY, THE VAMPIRE SLAYER:** from adolescence to adulthood, in real time

● **PATRICK O'BRIAN:** a 22-volume historical novel, filled with technical detail



Symbol

Ψ

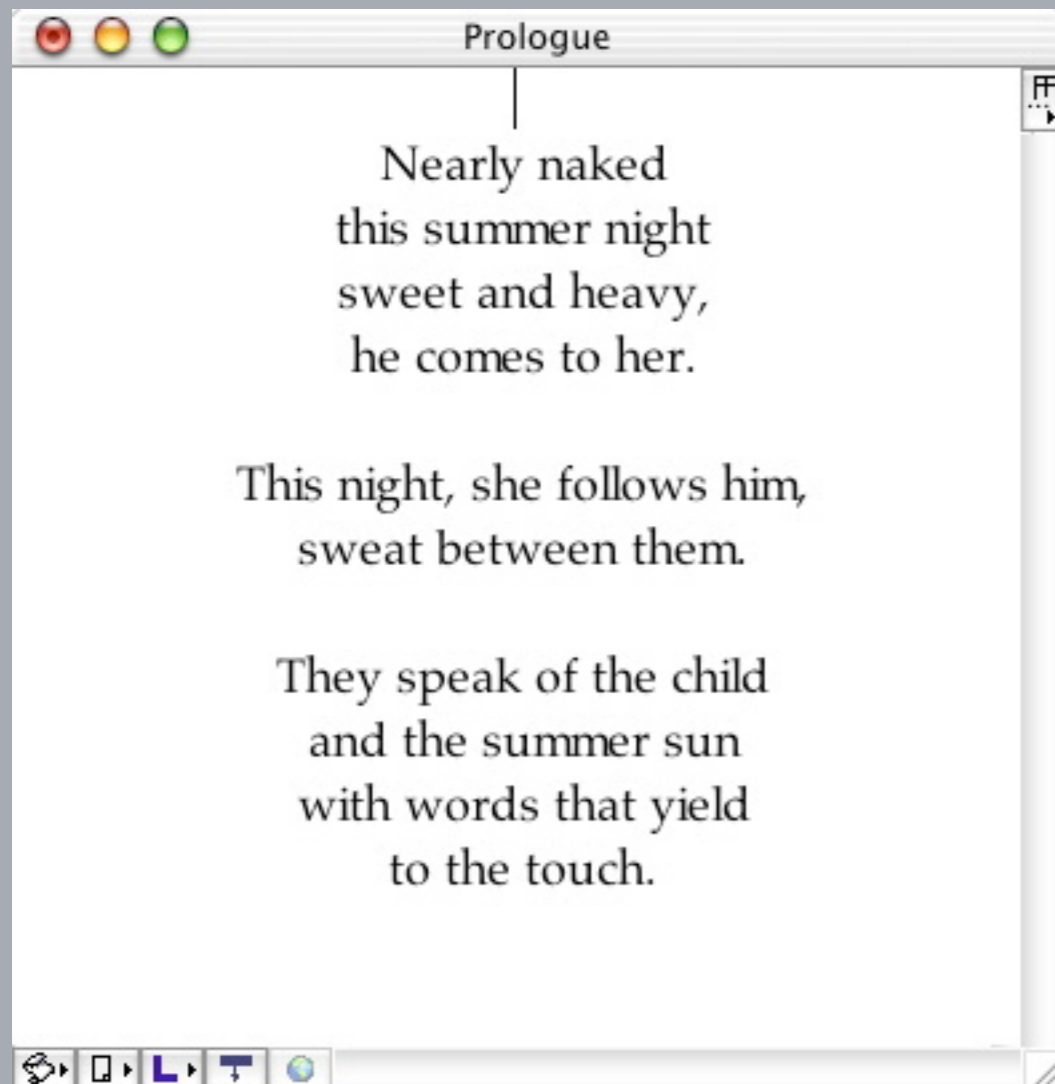
Quantum Mechanics

The Rights of Man

Polixena's sacrifice



Newer Than New!



Mary Kim Arnold, "Lust"



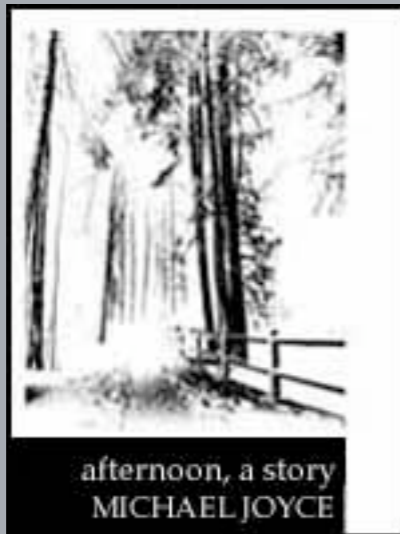
St. Pancras Station, London, 2003

Long Lasting!



The Victorian Web

literature, history, & culture in
the age of Victoria



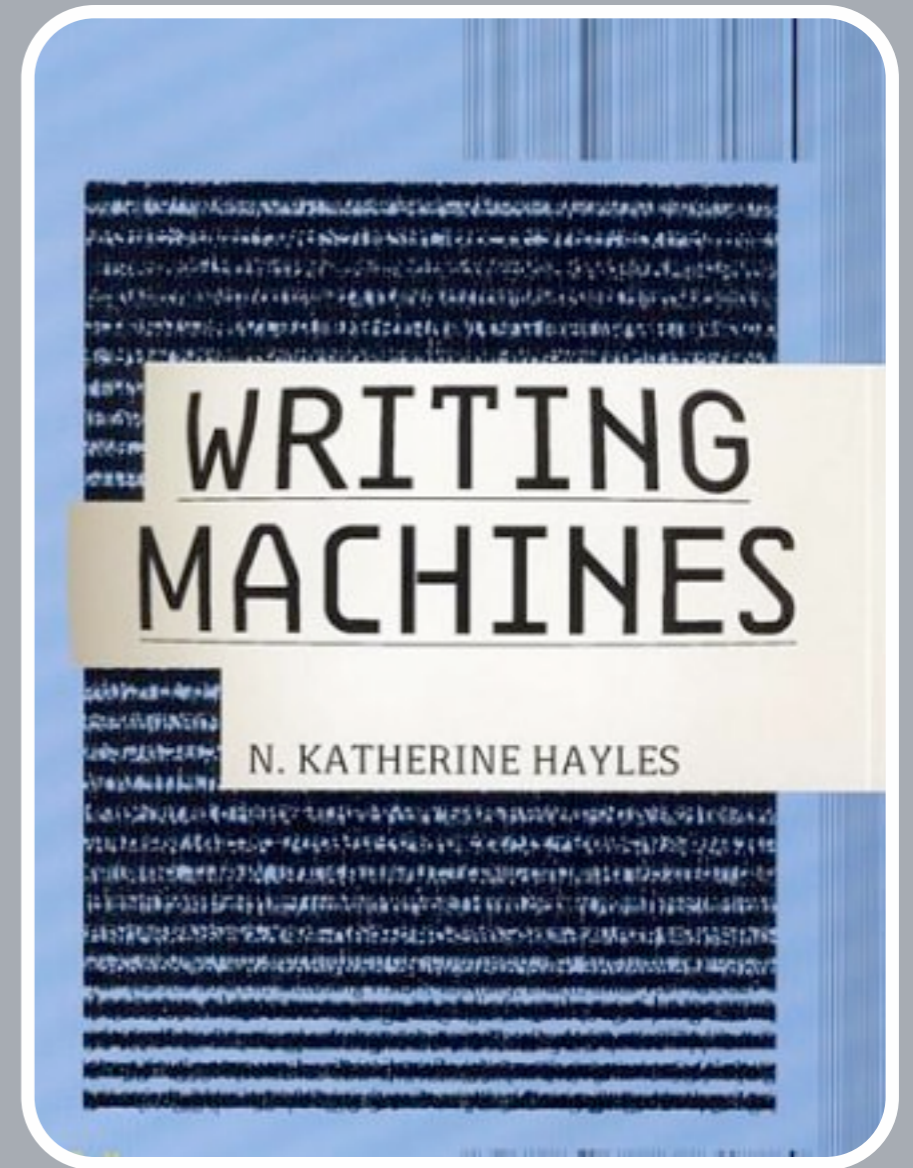
The two important
hypertexts from
Hypertext '87 are
readily available and
popular today.

Nobody knows how to make love more real, or the memory of the Occupation more transparent.

Next to this, improving a banking transaction a little more efficiently loses some of its luster.

Materiality?

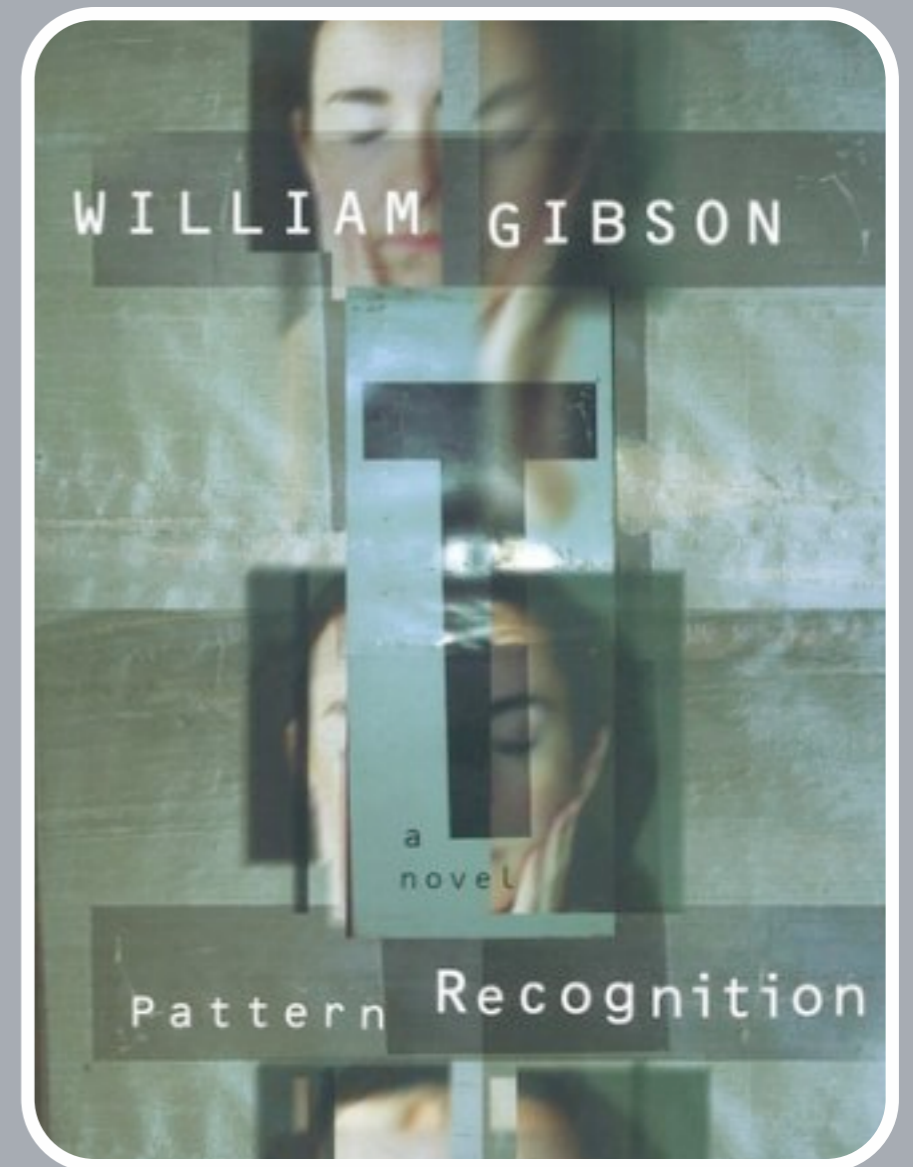
“Focusing on materiality allows us to see the dynamic interactivity through which a literary work mobilizes its physical embodiment in conjunction with its verbal signifiers to construct meanings that implicitly construct the user/reader as well.”



Matters

“The one hundred and thirty four previously discovered fragments, having been endlessly collated...have yielded no period and no particular narrative direction.

Zaprudered into surreal dimensions of purest speculation, ghost-narratives have emerged and taken on shadowy but determined lives of their own.”



“In the flat’s main room, she finds Damien’s faithful Cube is on, but sleeping, the night-light glow of its static switches pulsing gently. Damien’s ambivalence toward design showing here: He won’t allow decorators through the door unless they basically agree not to do that which they do, yet he holds onto this Mac for the way you can turn it upside down and remove its innards with a magic little aluminum handle.”

William Gibson, *Pattern Recognition*

Photo: Laurie A. Duncan, www.cubeowner.com





Re/construe

Invent nothing, deny nothing. Speak up, stand up, stay out of school.— David Mamet, *True and False*

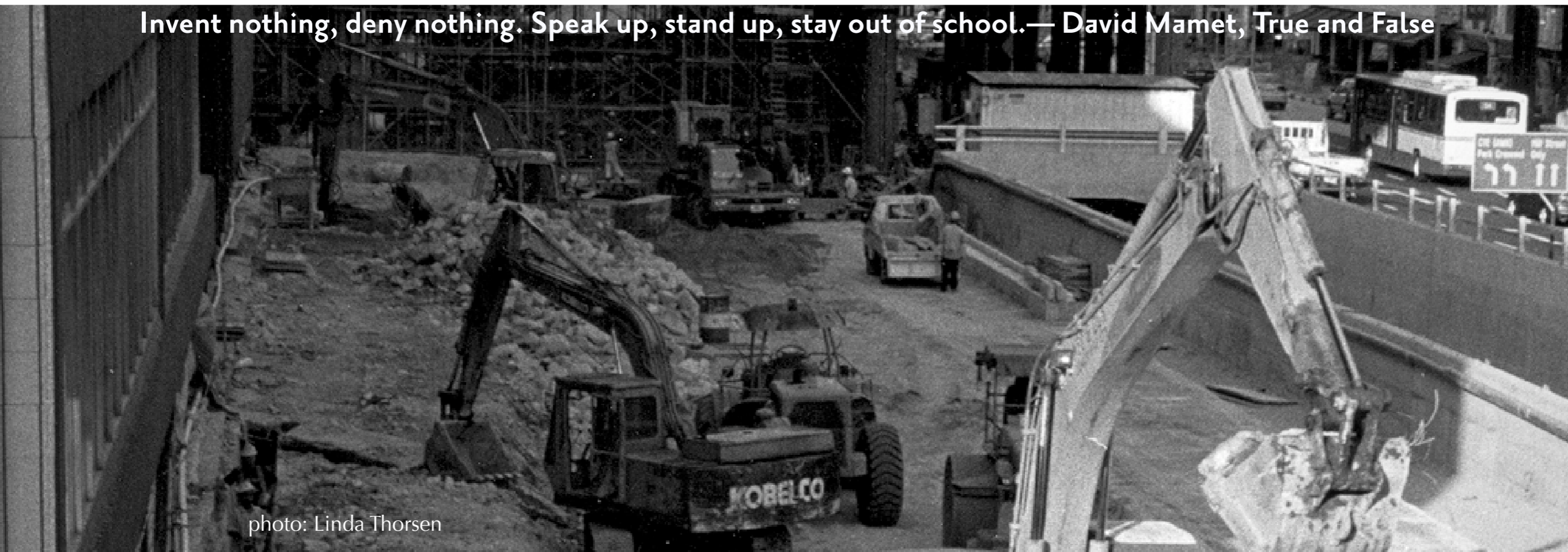
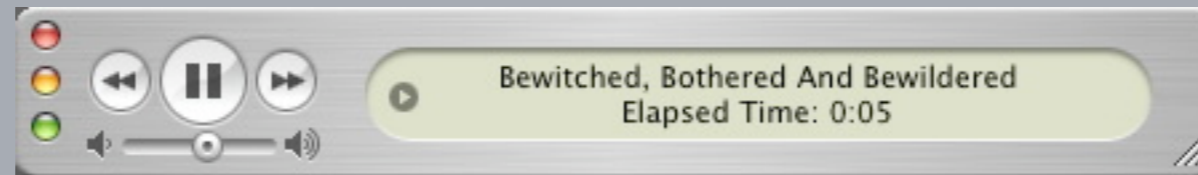


photo: Linda Thorsen

Pet



Apple Computer, iTunes 4.0, 2003

“The aesthetic experience they give rise to is based on recognition rather than perception. The users experience something familiar rather than new, so are conditioned to accept things as they are.”

-- Anthony Dunne, *Hertzian Tales*

Pet



My first college fling was a Berkeley punk, a high-school dropout who slept in a converted boiler-room on a threadbare mattress he had found in the street.

He worked for minimum wage at a t-shirt shop, and his lack of money was a convenient excuse for an anti-consumer, punk-rock lifestyle. Newly sprung from a bourgeois suburban background, I thought that was pretty cool.

His bed epitomized his belief system. He didn't own any real bedding, so we used a canvas mailsack as a pillow, and slept under one ancient crocheted blanket - the kind that grandmothers spend months crocheting for their first-born grandchildren. It smelled of must and cheap shampoo.

I was always freezing cold when I stayed in his bed, but I thought that was kind of cool too.

Alien

“At Pixar, they have a word for almost human — but not quite.

Monster.”

Alvin Ray Smith

Alien

language was devoid of all grammar, all syntax, to the extent that the whole
conjugation of verbs was wrong. Most of the time she uti torn an infinitive
formed out of a weak pas to torment, and she never usement, articles. In the
further course of ltornent, to torment, to torment, to torment, to torment,
searched for torment, to torment, to torment, to torment, to torment,
shil to torment, to torment, to torment, to torment, to torment, to torment,
all know how to torment, to torment, to torment, to torment, to torment,
ldginrment, to Firmentn, shining ho o torment, to stand each other through
to torment, to tormilhouettes on the waves. nt, to torment, to notice a pale face
to torment, to talk backfaced too, watching gorrent, ato tor in the count
tofferinnt pick up the pace. Come to me. We tro theormeing with her m
awoke onement. And I almost call out as your nt, to torment, to be an
to torment, to take a turtle, your shield hollow neo torment, to to
to torment, moving toward you, hear my feet on to torment, to torment of day
ee my rment, my hen slithers over your shoulder when you knot, to to patient,
to toling up onto your feet. Steady, you make a fo torment, to use the
s now - how else could you do it? - but hold ent, to torment, to
to to Hold out my hand, catch. Hold out my hand, palm forw, to torment
w to ers, their sway becomes spasm becomes falling behind the to
into rmen(They will live. They will slide aboard boats. They wilorn
to to can see my reflection, and do I only imagine the blaenblis
assotoring edge of water. Feeling sea mist or snake blood o, tocinati
to he sword into my throat stops, sticks halfway. Atory, but
Then eyesquint, then blood, then breath hisnenn
age. Train whistle. Falling to wet dust,
edge. Train whistle. Crawling ttoed
Hot for much longer, notrn day
lection in your glasses. nt during
help me. To cut my sna t, as well
fingers grow in theirtor, beginni
I do feel it, each ti, e not note
ch your gaze. Perhaps that of her

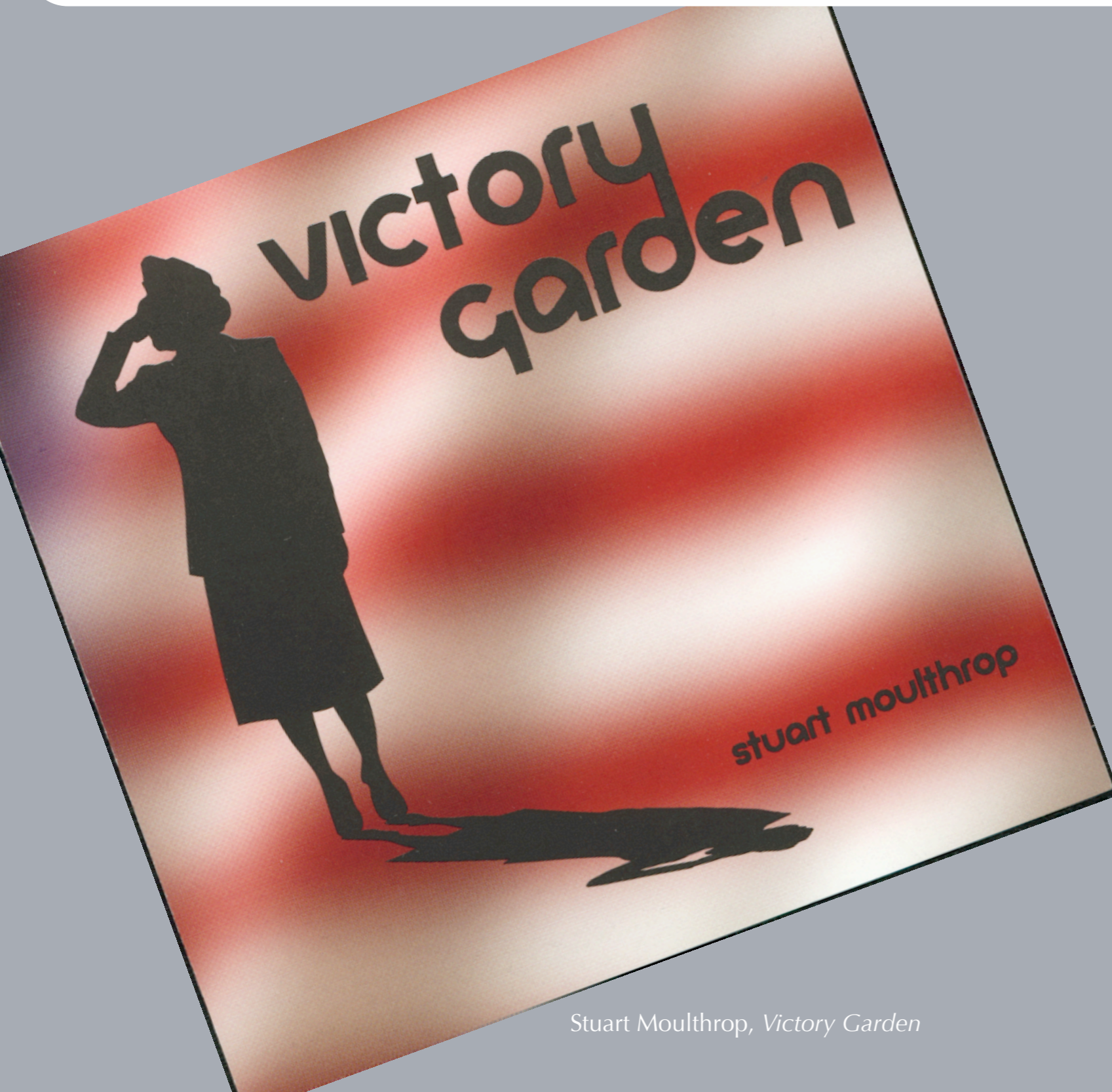


Noah Wardrip-Fruin, *Talking Cure*

Alien



Robotic resistance



Jude leaned over and kissed him again. Her mouth was warm and strong, its contours and pressures strange to him. "Close your eyes." She passed a hand over his eyelids. "Open up your memories. Tell me what you remember about her."

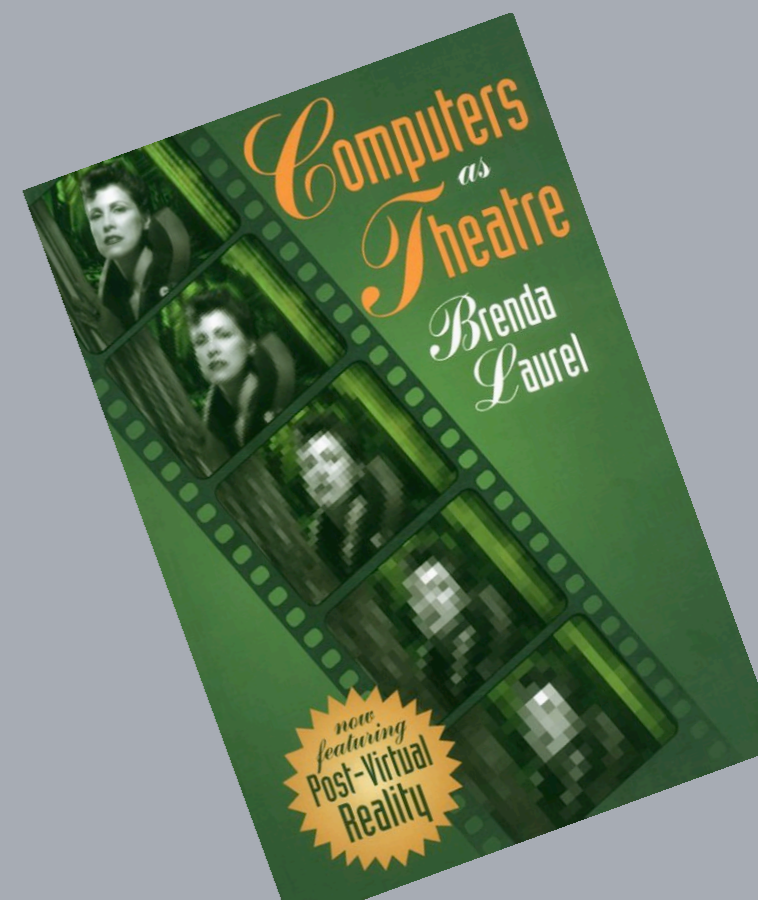


My Friend Hamlet

“Tragedy requires that the characters be blind (as we ourselves, at times, are blind). If you let a sane and sensible reader-protagonist into the room, everything is bound to collapse.”

Mark Bernstein and Diane Greco, “Card Shark and Thespis”, *First Person*, Noah Wardrip-Fruin, ed.

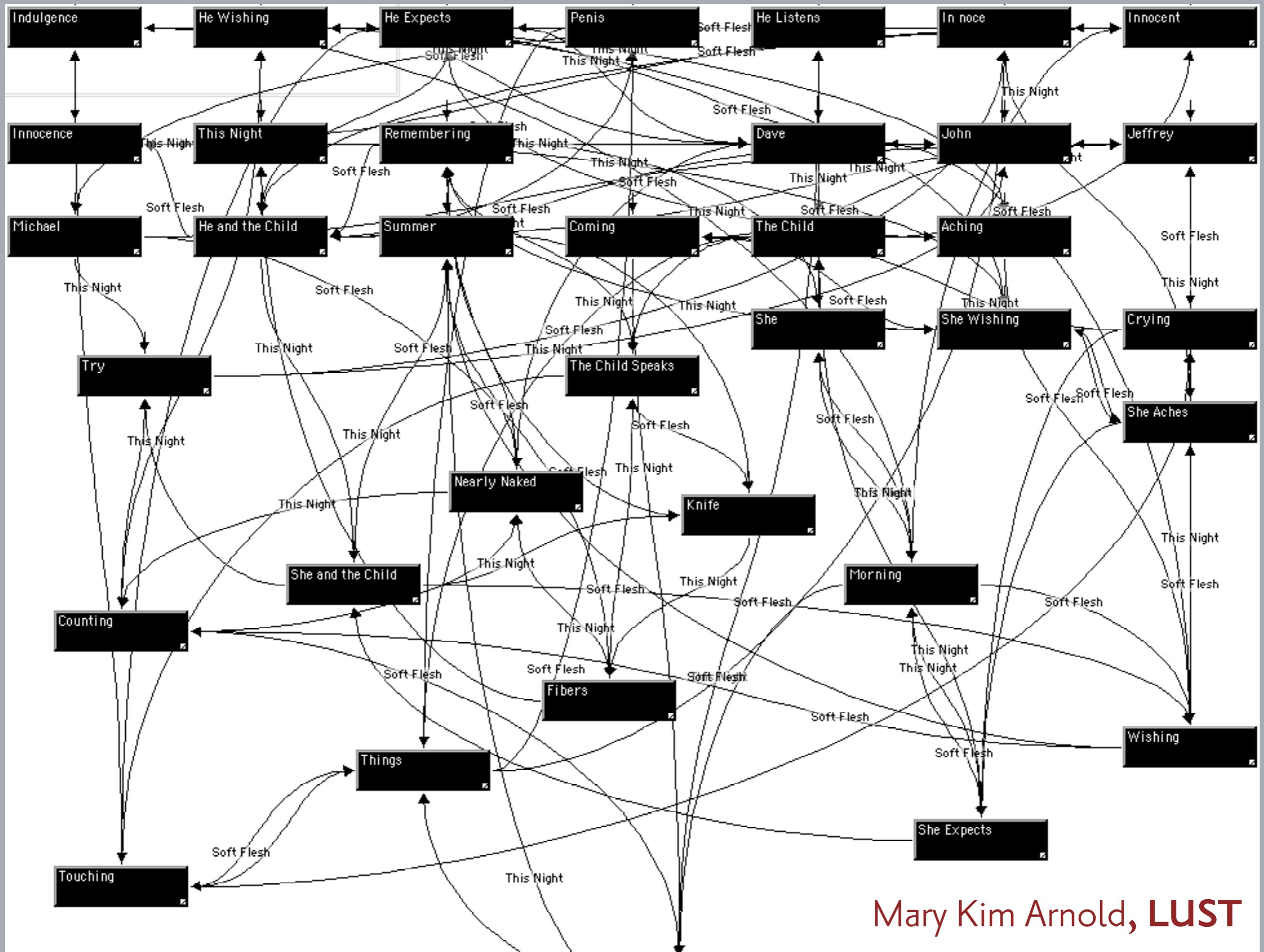
on beyond poetry



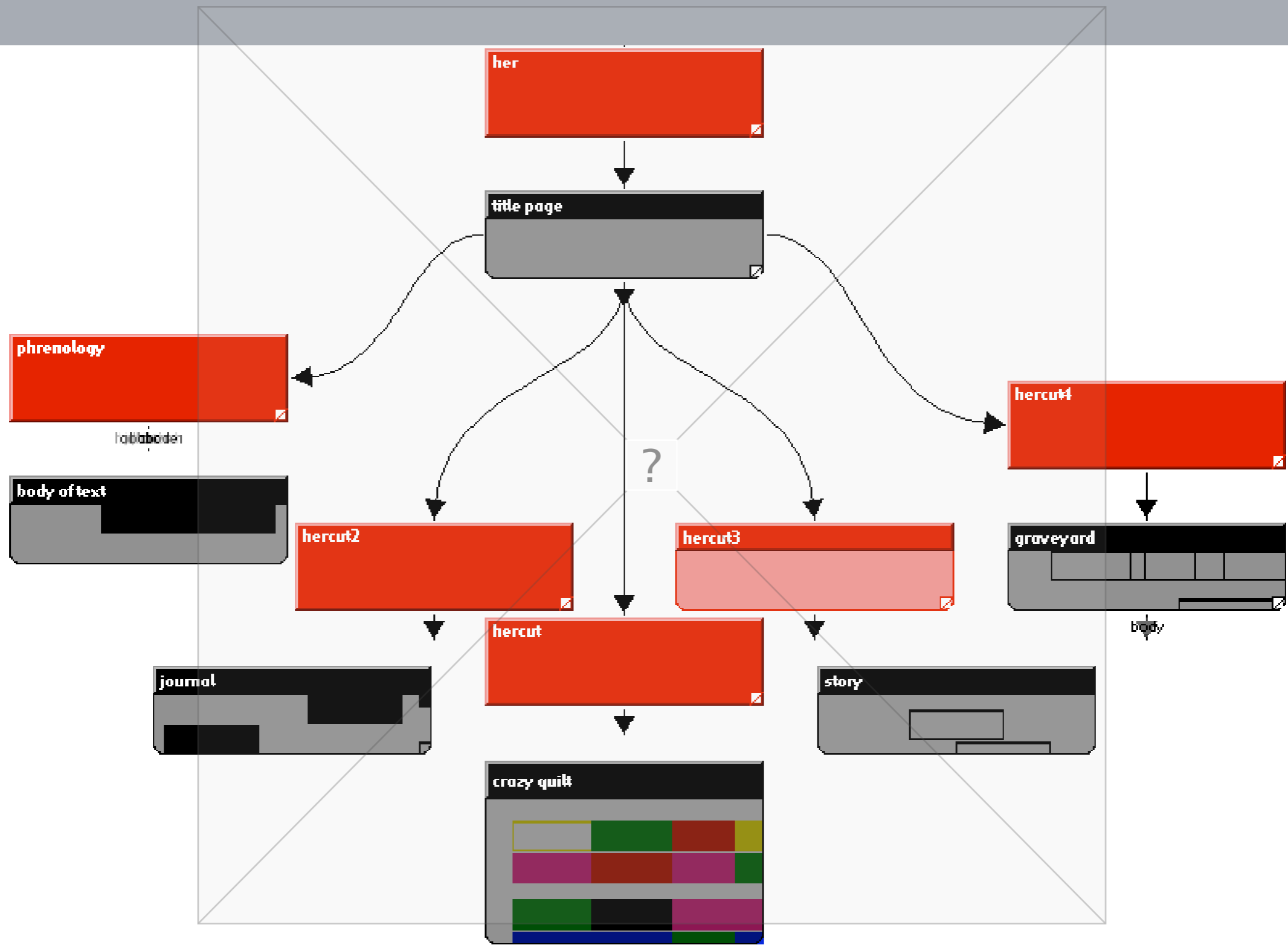


Rancho de Chimayo, Taos

```
tr -cs A-Za-z '\n' | tr A-Z a-z | sort | uniq
```



Mary Kim Arnold, **LUST**



Small Pieces, Loosely Joined



Mya Pyin, Myanmar

"In the tradition of Marshall McLuhan, a startlingly fresh look at a new medium."
—Daniel H. Pink, author of *Free Agent Nation*

a unified theory of the web

david weinberger

co-author of the *cluetrain manifesto*

Patterns

A Pattern Language

Towns · Buildings · Construction



Christopher Alexander

Sara Ishikawa · Murray Silverstein

WITH

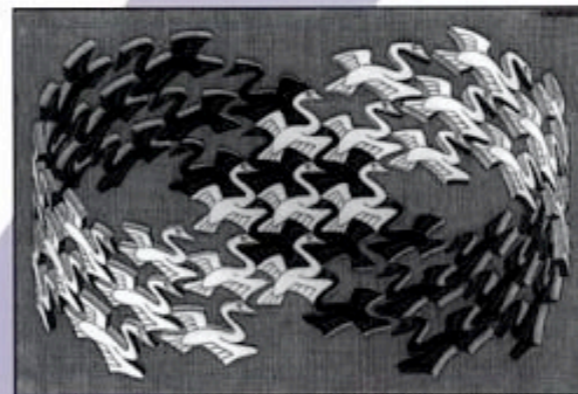
Max Jacobson · Ingrid Fiksdahl-King

Shlomo Angel

Design Patterns

Elements of Reusable
Object-Oriented Software

Erich Gamma
Richard Helm
Ralph Johnson
John Vlissides



Cover art © 1994 M.C. Escher / Cordon Art - Baarn - Holland. All rights reserved.

Foreword by Grady Booch



ADDISON-WESLEY PROFESSIONAL COMPUTING SERIES



PATTERNS OF HYPERTEXT



PATTERNS OF HYPERTEXT

Proc. Hypertext 98, ACM, NY

<http://www.eastgate.com/patterns>

Cycle

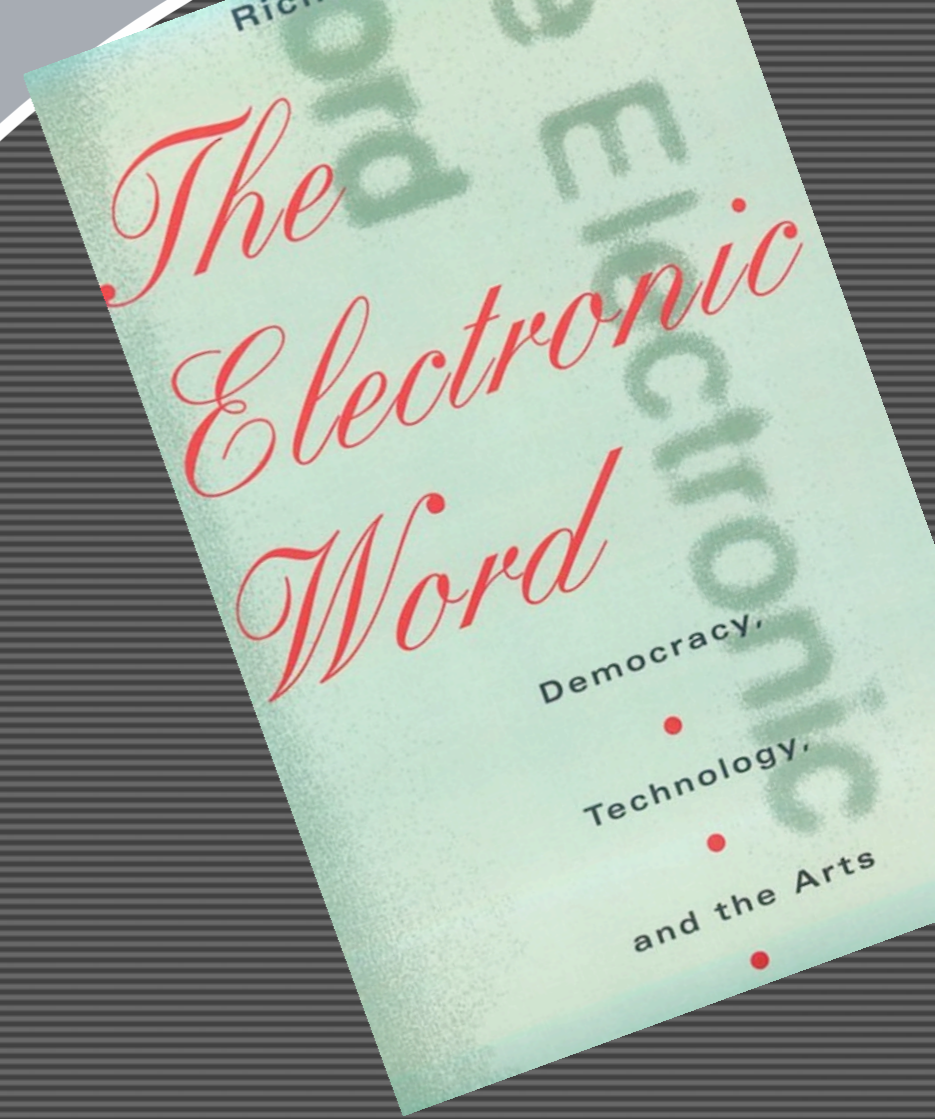
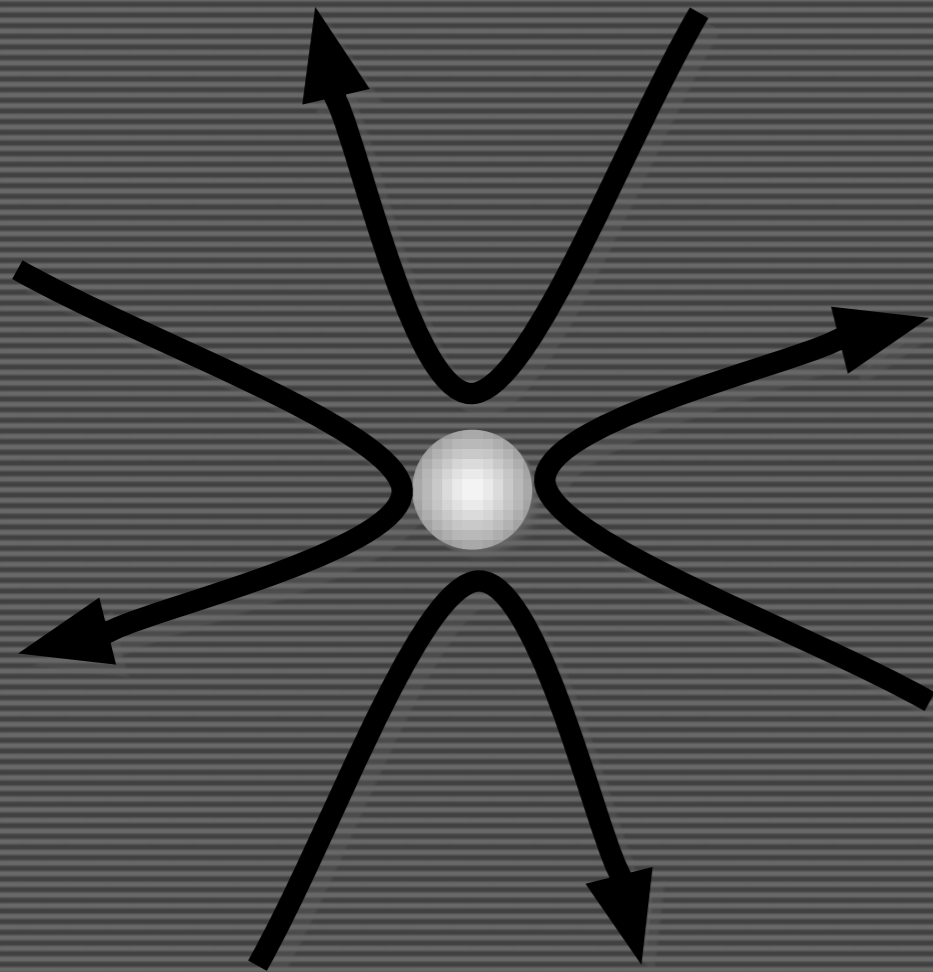
“Of recursus, there is hallucination, déjà vu, compulsion, riff, ripple, canon, isobar, daydream, and theme and variation...Of timeshift there is the death of Mrs. Ramsay and the near disintegration of the house...Leopold Bloom on a walk, and a man who wants to say he may have seen his son die. Of the renewal there is every story not listed previously.”

Michael Joyce, **OF TWO MINDS**

Recurrence is not an error. Multivalence is not a vice.

Mark Bernstein et al., **Contours of Coconstructive Hypertext**

Feint



Free and knowing navigation

Clarity, brevity, sincerity

...and many more



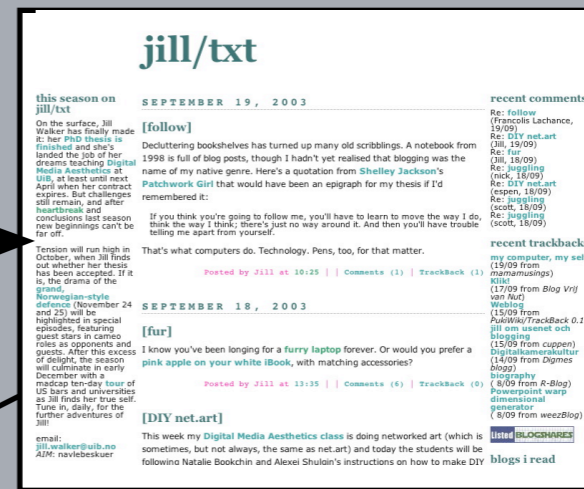
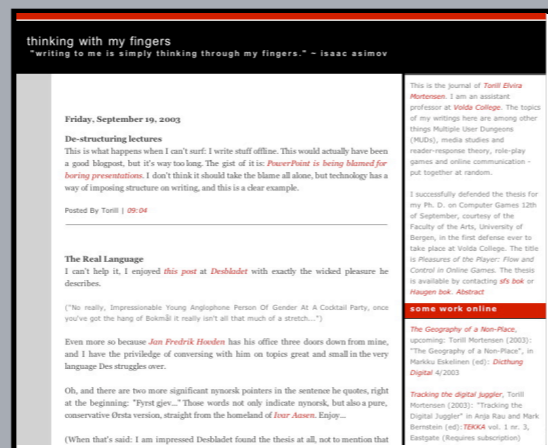
- cycle
 - contour
 - Joyce's cycle
 - Douglas' cycle
- counterpoint
- mirrorworld
- tangle
- sieve
- collage
- neighborhood
- split/join
 - Rashomon
- missing link
- feint

VERNACULAR HYPERTEXT

Complex structure hasn't
been popular amongst
web developers.

Complex collage, on the
other hand, is wildly
popular.

Emergent Structure

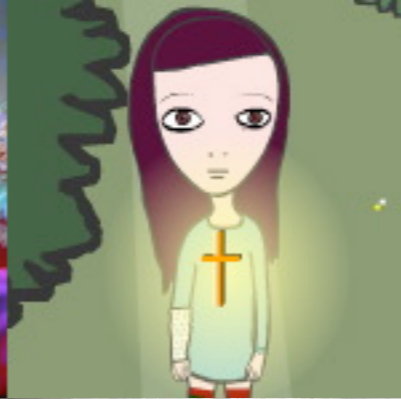


Ten Rules for Weblogs

1. Write for a reason
2. Write often
3. Write tight
4. Make good friends
5. Find good enemies
6. Let the story unfold
7. Stand up, speak out
8. Be sexy
9. Use your archives
10. Relax



Mark Bernstein, *Writing the Living Web*,
A List Apart August 2002



with the books she continued to devour, were low-tech and portable enough to be received on occasion when she read in the bathtub in every conceivable position. But her environment as much as the Middle deep into her bones and would always look old say, "Le papier, c'est moi." Sure intellectually, the vibrancy of the physical w



TEKKA

www.TEKKA.net

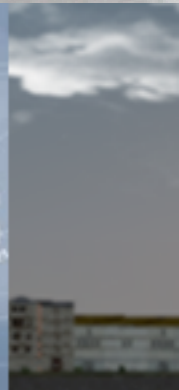
Baghdad TV Studio, 2003
Mark Meadows, "Loot", TEKKA 3
<http://www.tekka.net>



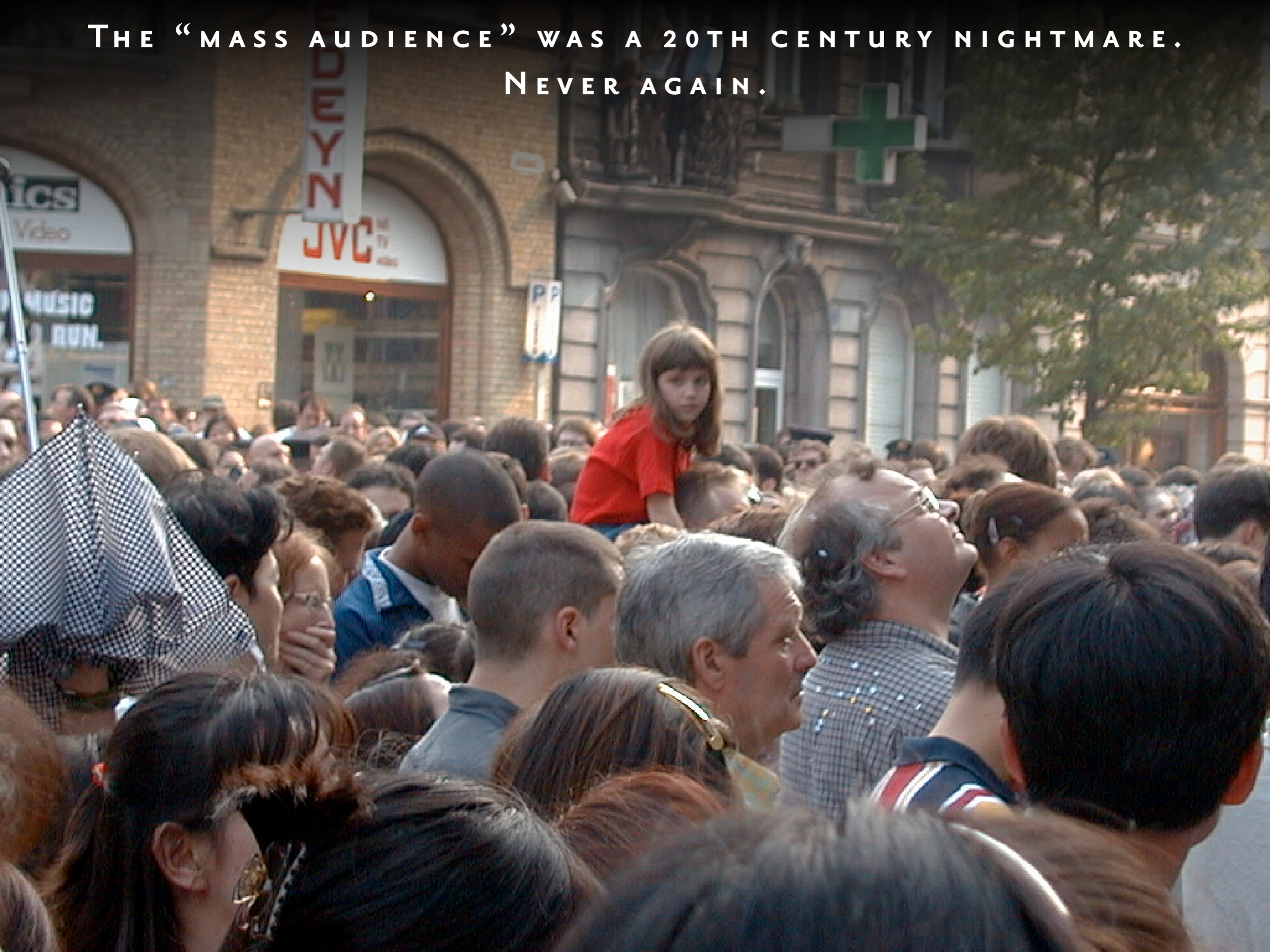
nterficti
Vom Schreiben in
Roberto Simanc
edition suhrka
SVI



SIMPLE WEBSITES
Organizing Content. Rich Sites.



THE “MASS AUDIENCE” WAS A 20TH CENTURY NIGHTMARE.
NEVER AGAIN.



NOT THE CAUSE, NOR THE GIRL.
WAVE AND PARTICLE.





○ **tools:** Tinderbox, Keynote, iView Media Pro, Painter

○ **fonts:** PRIORI Sans (Emigre), Optima, **Kane** (P22)

○ **images:** Mark Bernstein, Linda Thorsen, Chris Baldwin, Anja Rau

○ **thanks:** Barbara Bean, Elin Sjursen