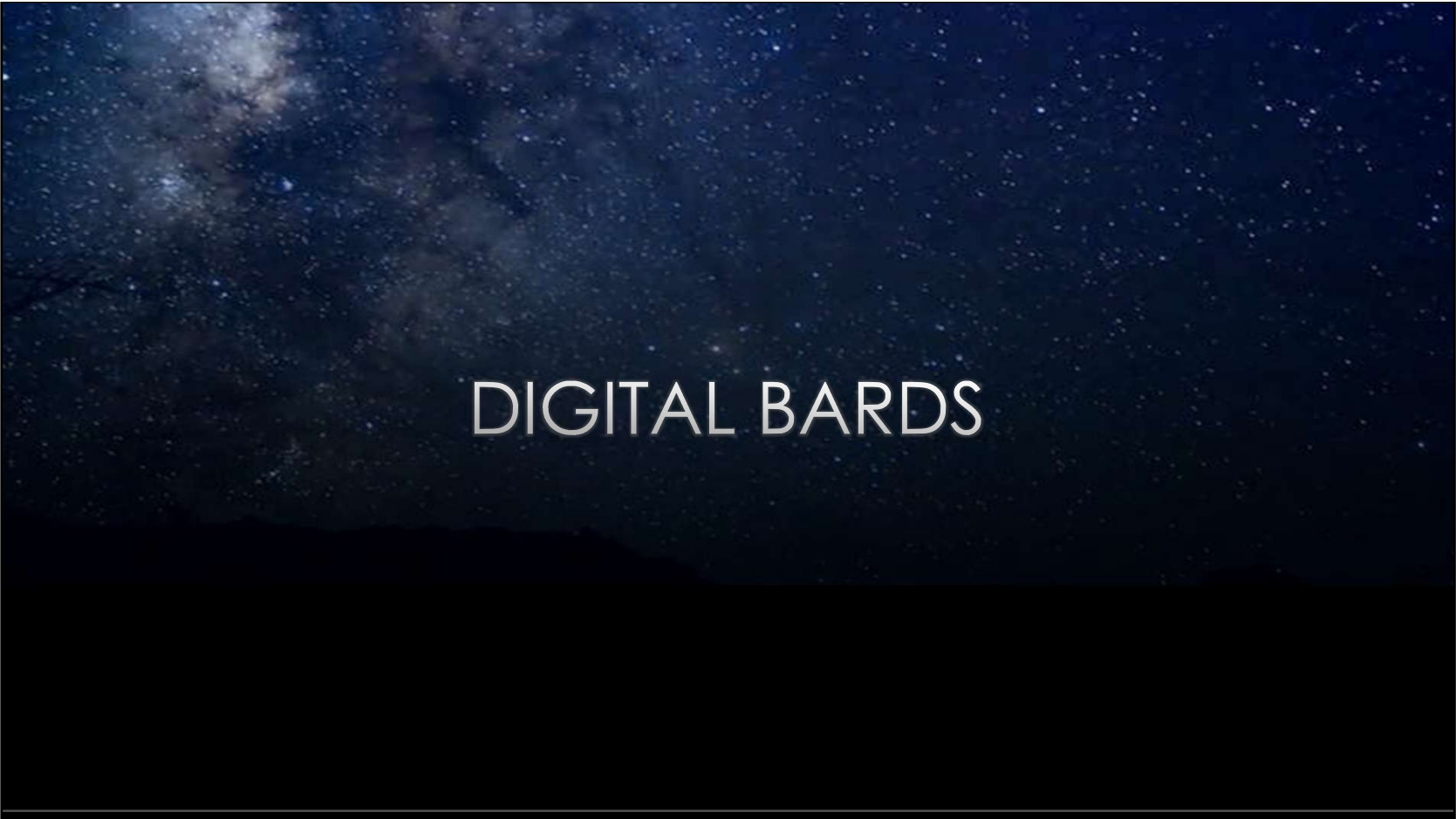
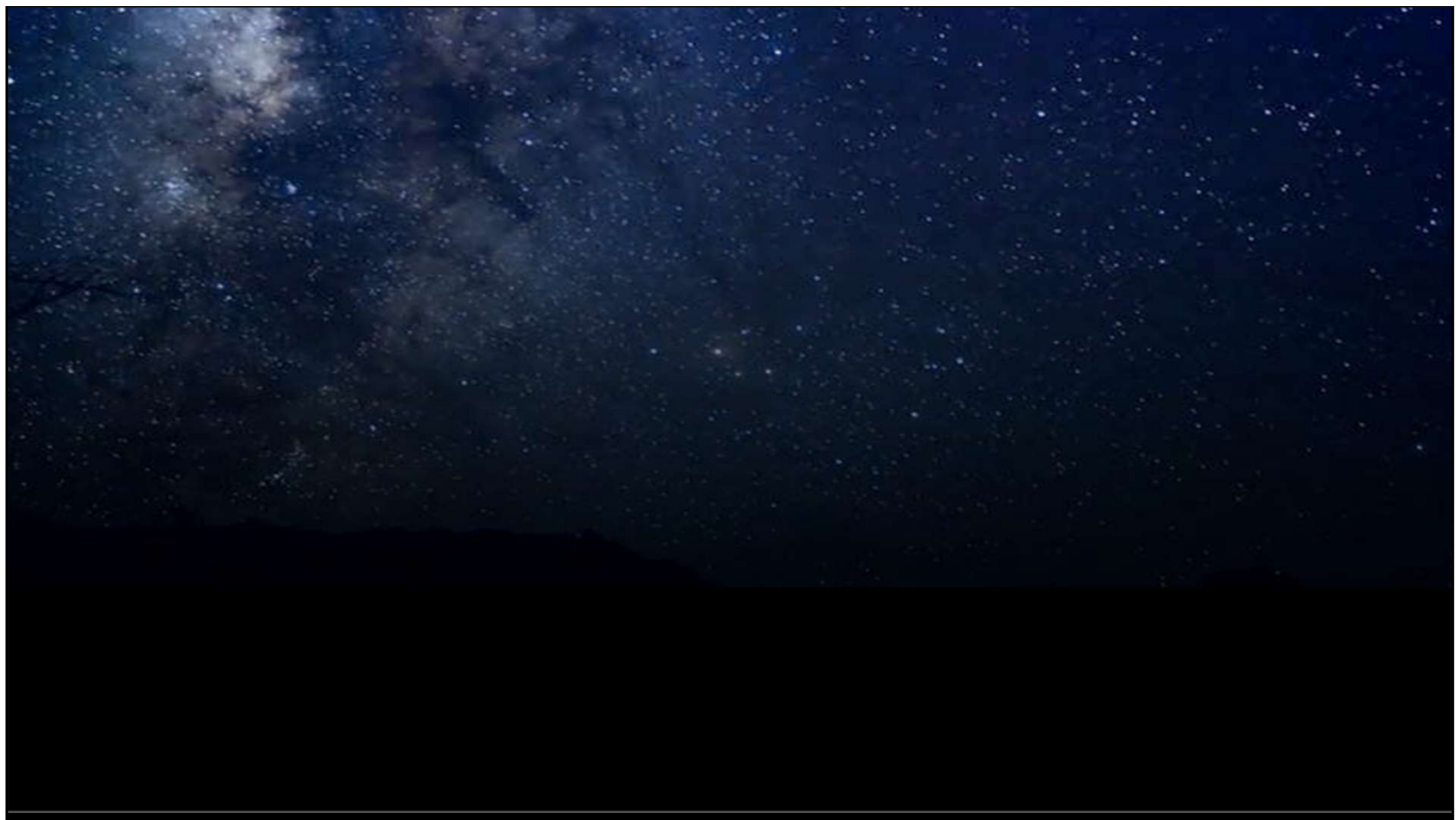


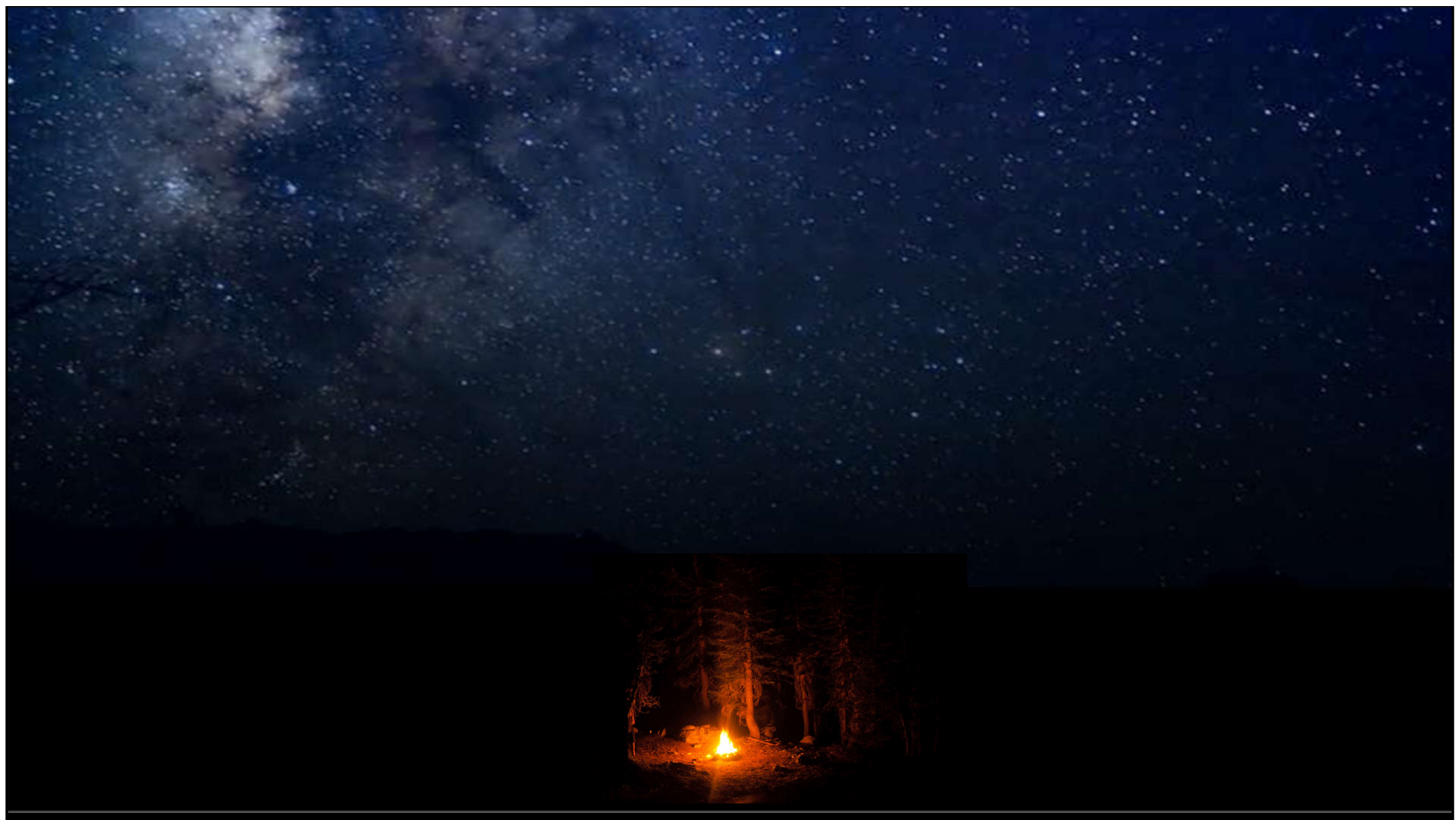


DIGITAL BARDS

Let me tell you a story, if I may.



The story I am going to tell you, ranges widely. I hope you don't mind if we venture into a bit of legal history, a dash of graph theory, a diversion into musicology, a very brief discussion of audio engineering, and so on.

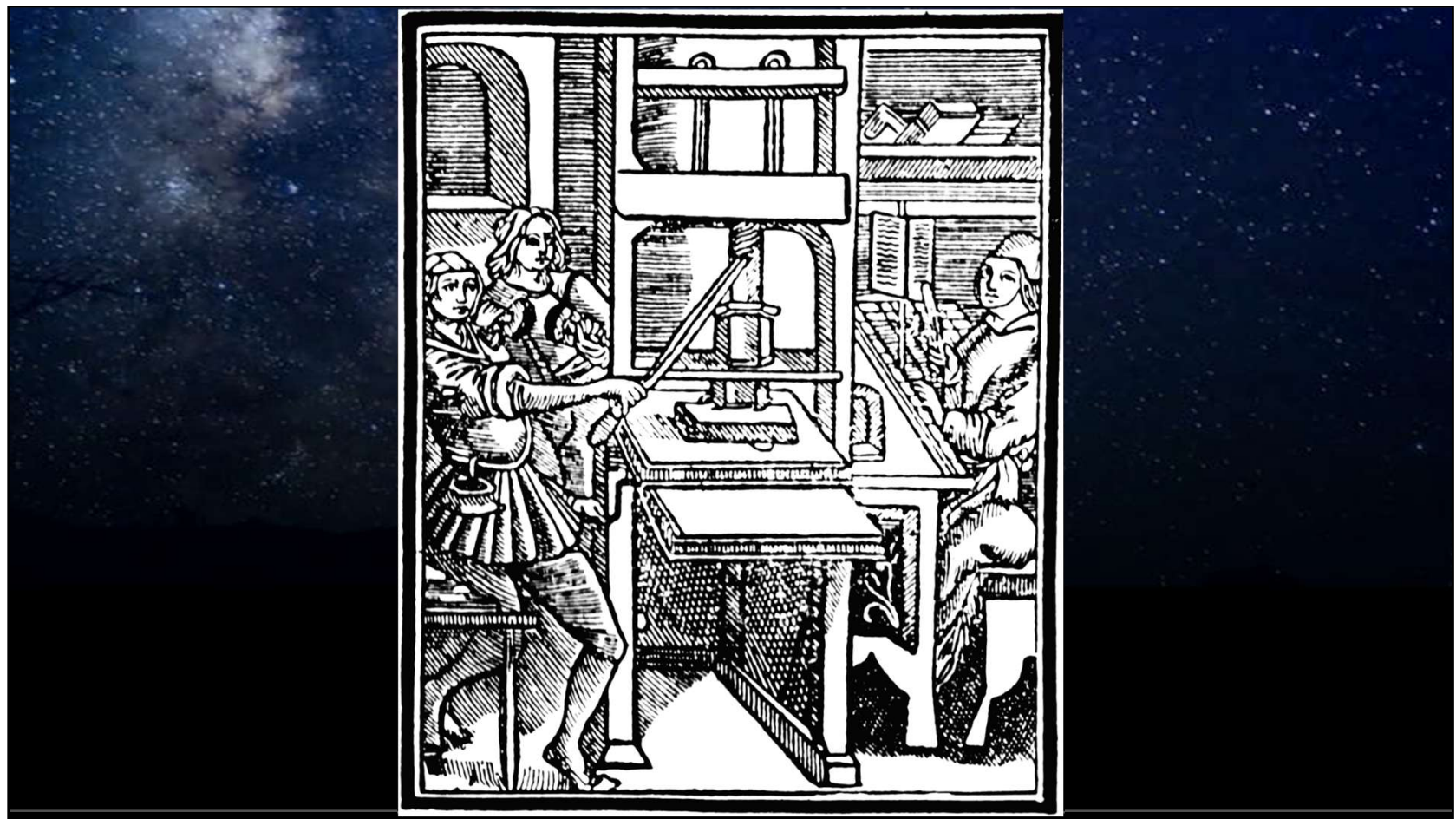


It's a story about long ago, when we huddled, rather like you are huddling here with me, in this auditorium around this lectern which I shall shortly chop up and burn to make a campfire.

Trace the shape of storytelling... oral forms, and what they implied about authority and dialogue
Rhyme as a way to provide structure and memory
Storyteller as authority but give and take and responsiveness
Think of telling a story to your children



The fixity of writing allowed a very different structure... one used by the church, for example to define orthodoxy
Early print culture was about authority cemented



But of course, over time what it permitted was many voices, as technology democratized who got to make an unassailable narrative



That implicit authority of print was important in many ways. It reflects a process of *containerization* that was gradually set into law starting with the Statute of Anne and the birth of copyright

Copyright laws because with the advent of the printing press, it was easy for someone to take something someone else had written, copy it and print it up and sell it as their own, and profit in a way that gave no revenues to the original publisher (or the author).

Anno Octavo
Annæ Reginae.

An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by Vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such Copies, during the Times therein mentioned.



Whereas Printers, Bookellers, and other Persons have of late frequently taken the Liberty of Printing, Reprinting, and Publishing, or causing to be Printed, Reprinted, and Published Books, and other Writings, without the Consent of the Authors or Proprietors of such Books and Writings, to their very great Detriment, and too often to the Ruin of them and their Families: For Preventing therefore such Practices for the future, and for the Encouragement of Learned Men to Compose and Write useful Books: May it please Your Majesty, that it may be Enacted, and be it Enacted by the Queens most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons in this present Parliament Assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That from and after the

Originally, the [Stationers' Company](#) had a monopoly on copyright; whoever entered the title of a publication in the guild's ledger first was held to have the exclusive right to make printed copies. Later, the [Statute of Anne](#) said that in fact it was the author who controlled the rights to make copies, and ever since, authors have negotiated away said permission in order to allow publishers to publish their work.



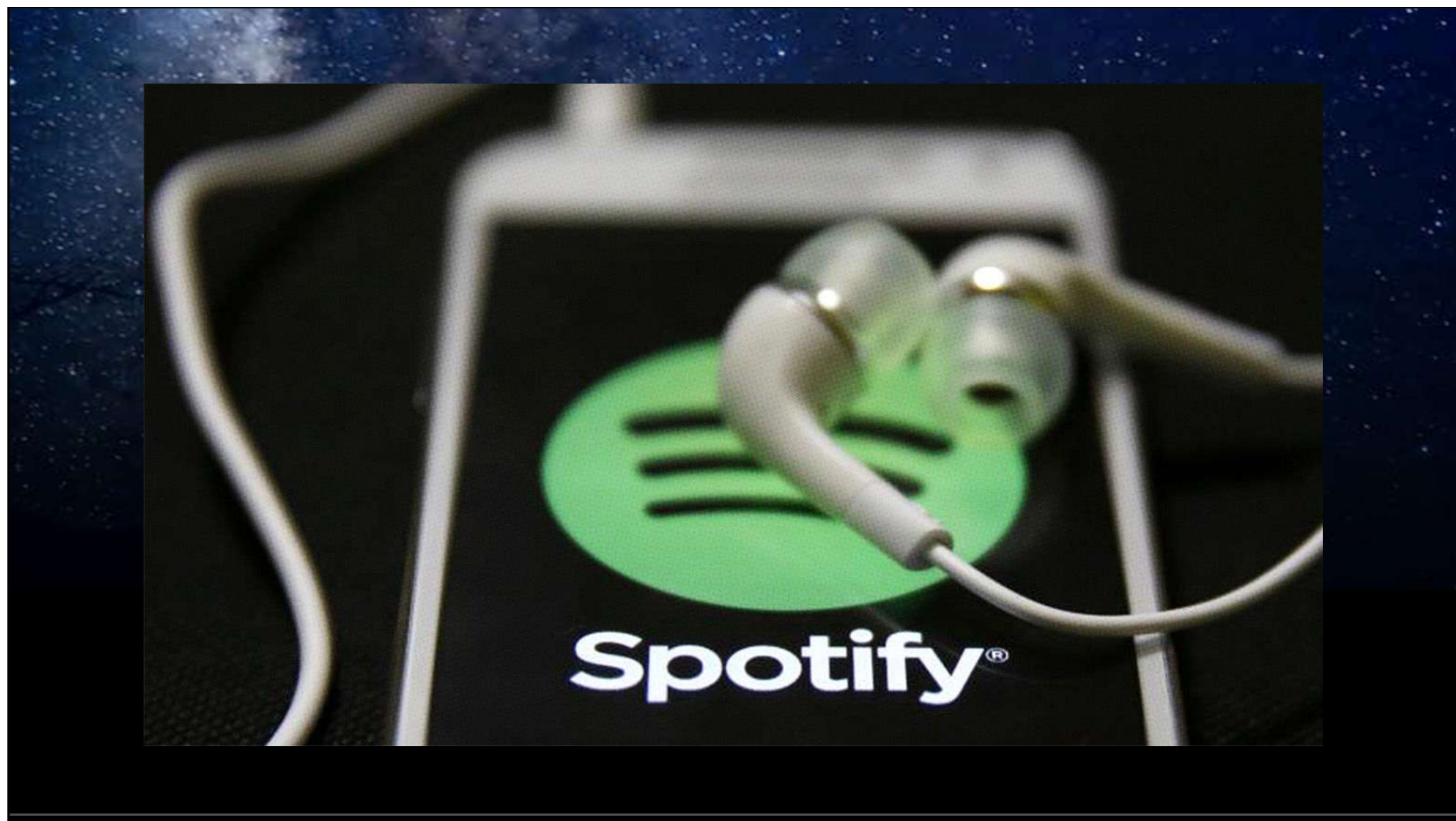
In the case of the book published back in 1710 when the Statute of Anne went into effect, all the way up through the last book you bought, what copyright controls is who gets to make a buck. The book is a container. Under the [Doctrine of First Sale](#), which was first enshrined in US law back in 1908, you can resell the container (or in fact, sell the container for the first time), and the original author of the copyrighted work has no say whatsoever over what happens to it. There's little question that the copyrighted work within the container essentially boosts the value of the container; try selling a blank book for the same price as a first edition of Dante's *Inferno*. However, you cannot profit by taking the copyrighted work and doing something else with it, say by issuing an audio recording, or creating a new edition of the copyrighted work and printing and selling that instead. The doctrine of first sale is about reselling the original containers, not making new ones.



There's two big exceptions: phonorecords



And software. The exceptions are about leasing, lending, and renting the container objects, not sale. And these exceptions, frankly, have zero to do with logic and everything to do with who had better lobbyists in Washington DC at the time. (Ever wonder why you can rent movies at Blockbuster, but not audio recordings?) In the muddled case of software, publishers rely on EULAs and shrinkwrap agreements, not copyright.



Why is this relevant? Well, quite a lot of stuff is getting containerized digitally these days.

I use container as a word because of what it says about the relative value of what is transmitted versus what form it is fixed in

When value of containers is high, we see an apogee of powerful voices telling us what to think



Think of illuminated manuscripts, the gorgeous printed books of the 19thc, and, eventually, the lushly produced music of the 20th and 21st c



In contrast, small voices have historically not been able to afford container polish.
Zines,



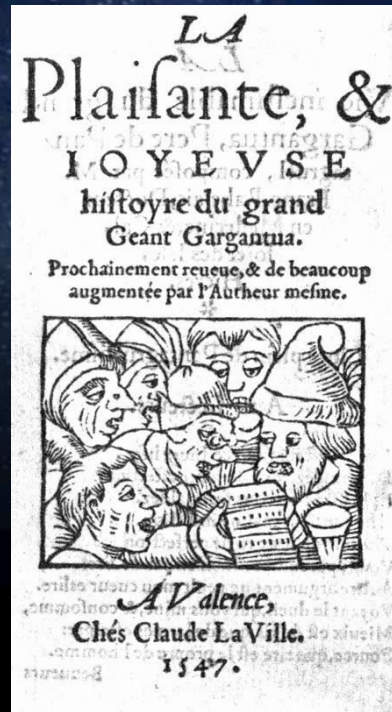
**REAL
MUSIC
ISN'T ON
THE RADIO**

mix tapes, three chords and the truth
These have been the tools of outsider voices

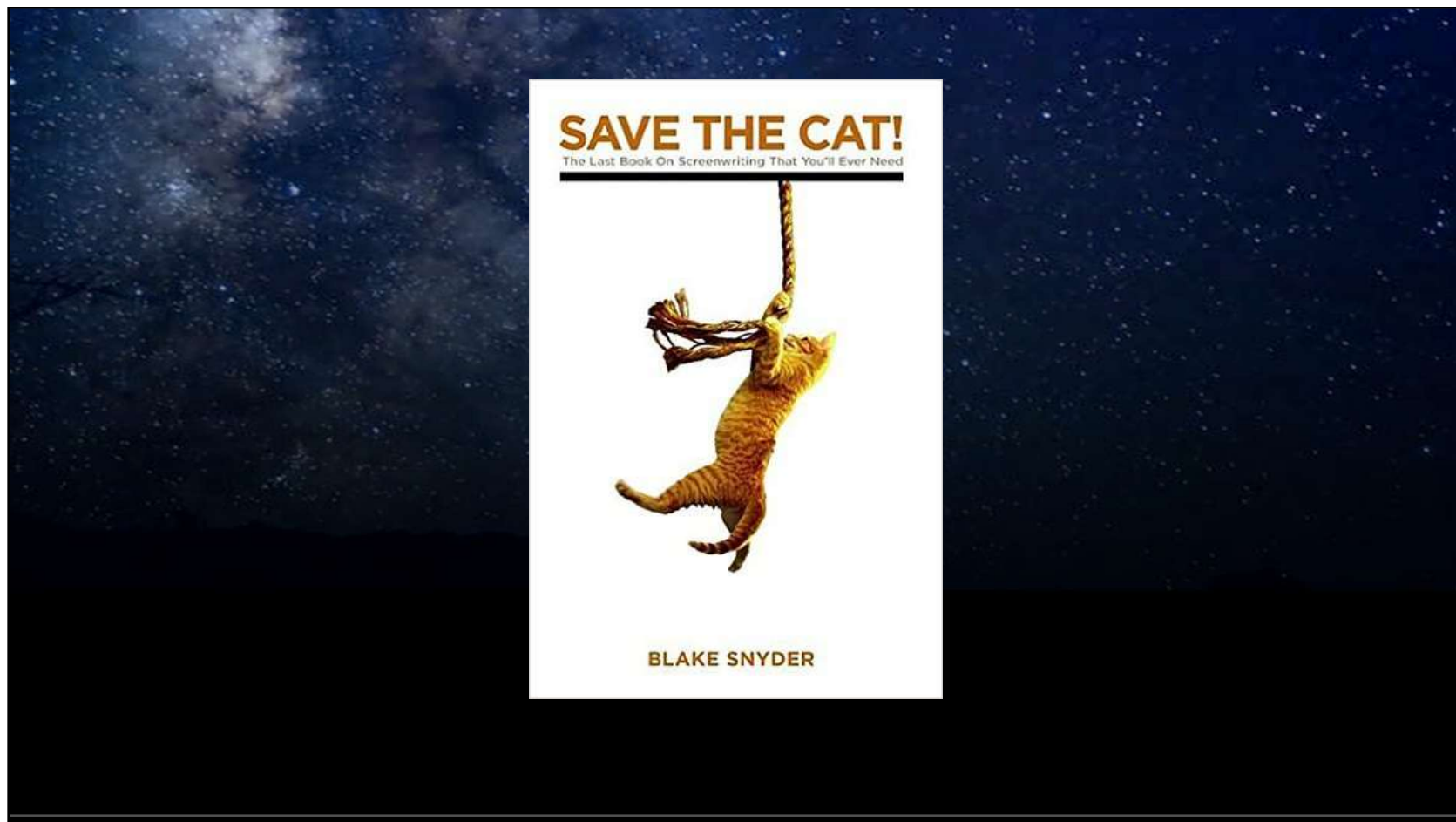


Let us consider another box: story versus narrative, plot versus myth

When we reread old myths and fairy tales up through early forms of the novel we are often struck by the way in which the plots are erratic, poorly structured, etc. They are shaggy dog stories, they are picaresques

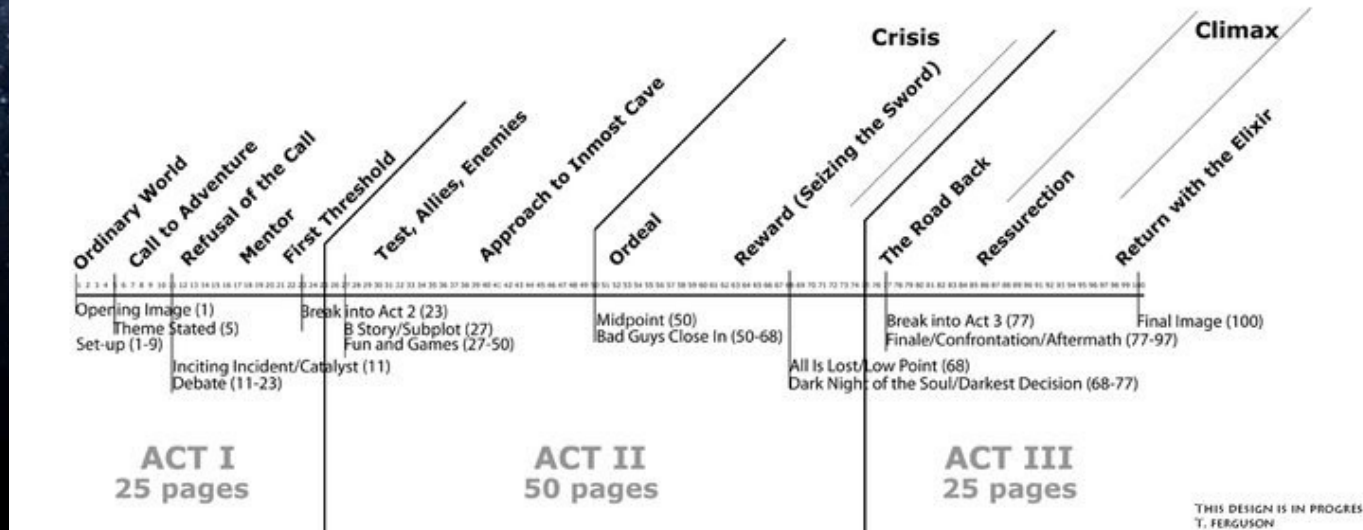


This is not because the folk of those days were less sophisticated, though certainly the form of the modern plot wasn't fully developed in the early novel; Gargantua and Pantagruel, or Jonathan Swift, weren't really following the dictates of



Save the Cat (for those who don't know, this is a book purporting to offer the perfect movie structure, down to the minute. most Hollywood blockbusters follow it rather slavishly these days).

The Hero's Journey Model Blake Snyder's 15 Beats



We can think of plot as predetermined story structure... a skeleton of incidents with causal or symbolic relationships

But narrative is what the storyteller thrives by; the process of mythmaking is less concerned with a preset structure



A PRIORI

A POSTERIORI

Depending on the theorist, we may see story, plot, and narrative given different twists and definitions, but let me offer up this notion: that the difference is largely about authorial ownership and who gets to go first in the storymaking process. Does an author select, create, and order events, and a reader decides their meaning; or does a reader select the events and their connection?



In cases where there is a skeletal structure first, a plot, we can term this authorial control... the reader is undergoing a process of immersion, willing suspension of disbelief, we might even call it imposition or brainwashing



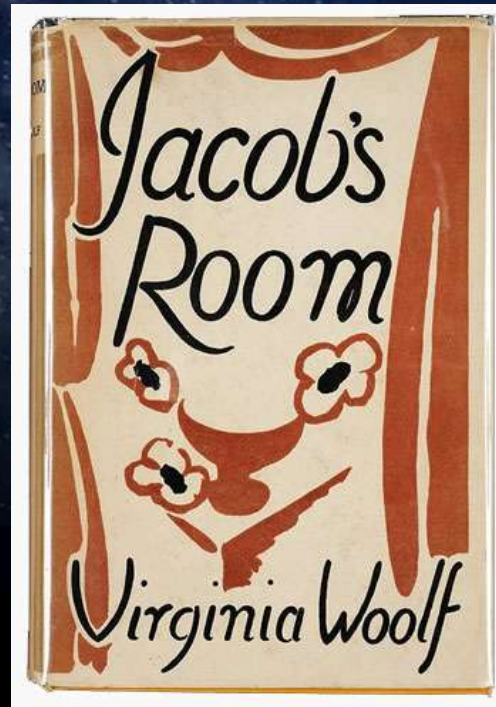
The structure of a plot does not admit of contradiction, generally, and we even have terms that indicate how authoritative this is supposed to be: unreliable narrator, for example.



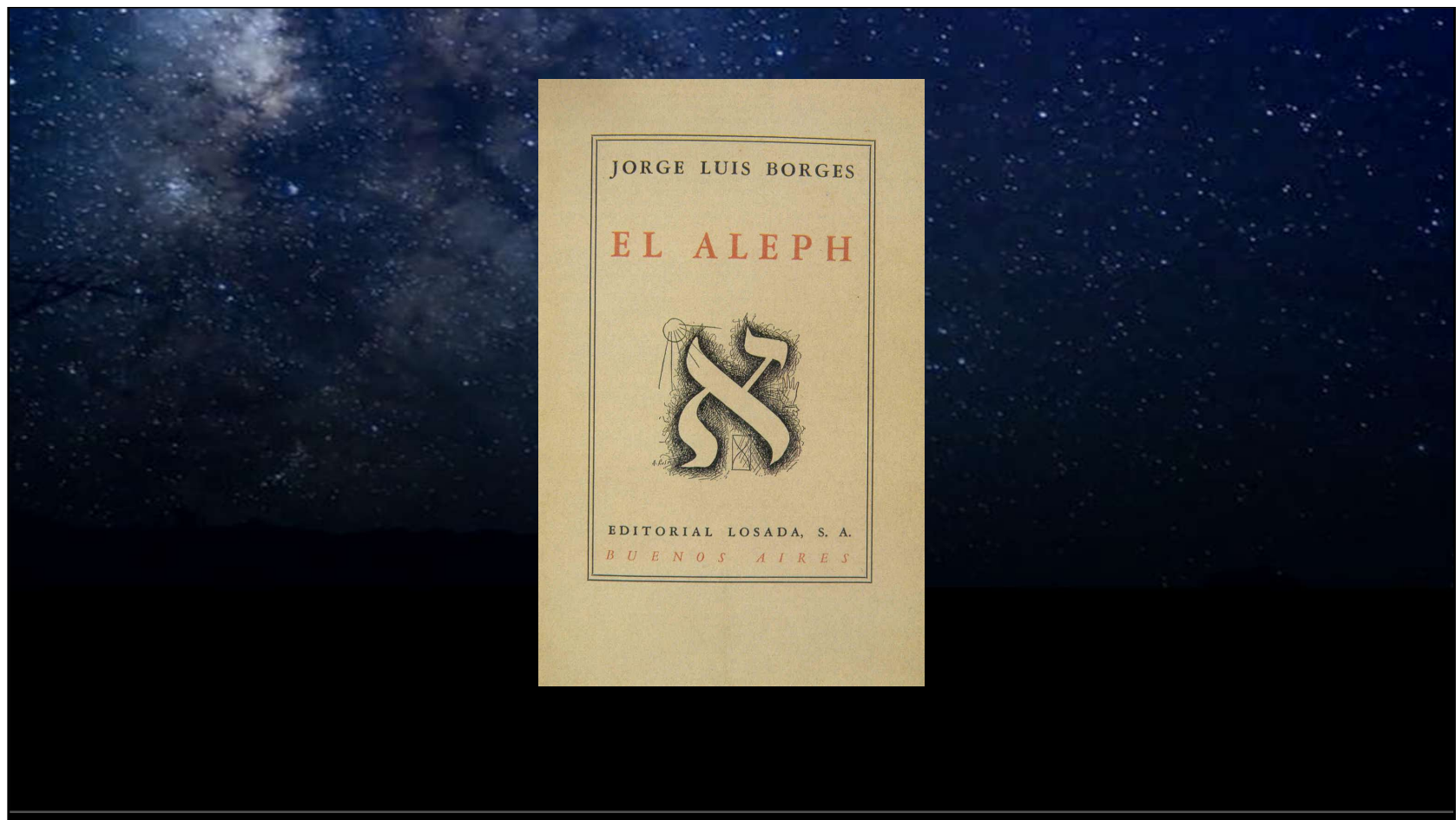
In cases where we have events first and we shape a myth out of them, we explain it to ourselves, we might term that the process of mythmaking. The resultant stories are diffuse and oft-disconnected
Both about lessons, but one is about lecturing, the other about *negotiating* an understanding



This is not to say that the folks who love plot have always been entirely comfortable with their power. There's a line to trace, particularly from impressionists into modernists, a decided break from prior We can think of art as that which embraces ambiguity; the contrast between the writing of a Dickens

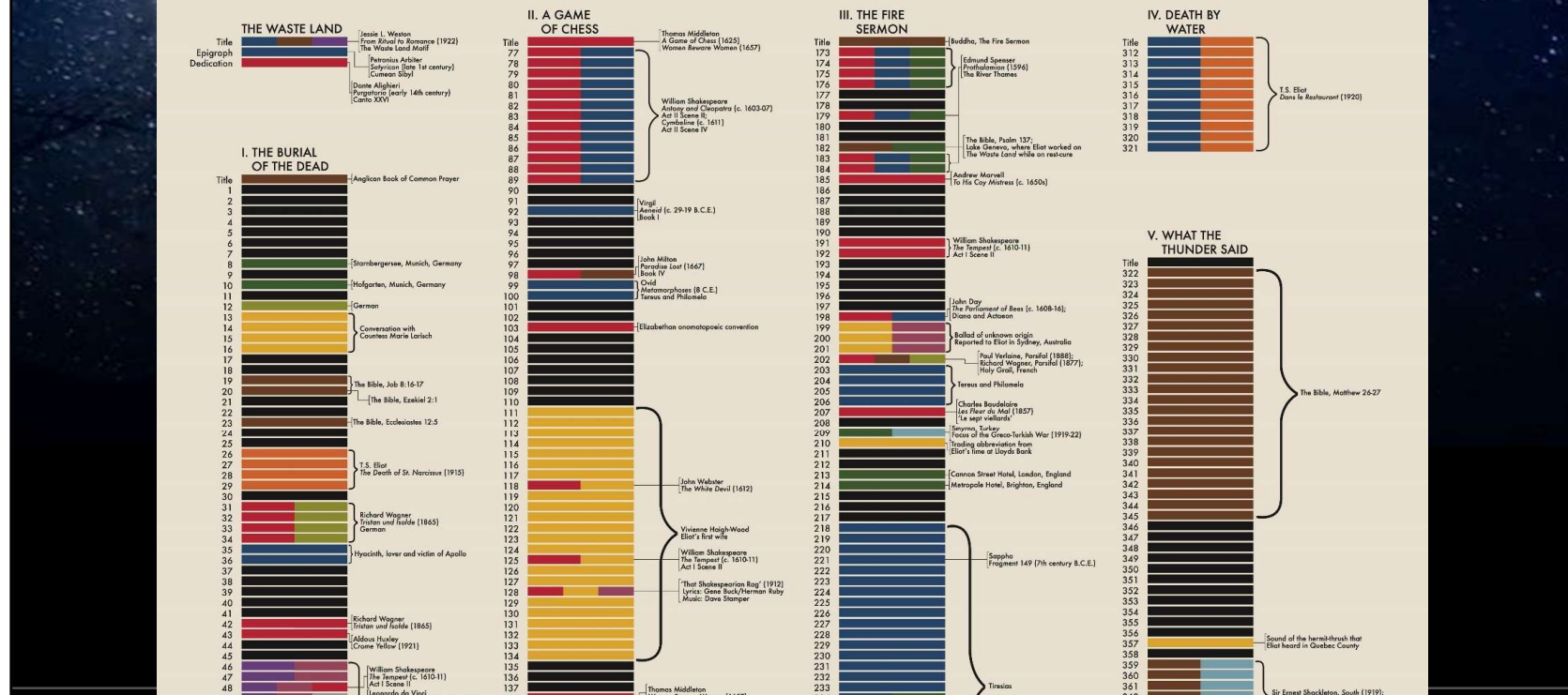


and, say, a Woolf, is quite distinct. Where one attempts to portray ambiguity in their plot, the other simply builds it into the structure, as in *Jacob's Room*, a novel where the protagonist is already gone

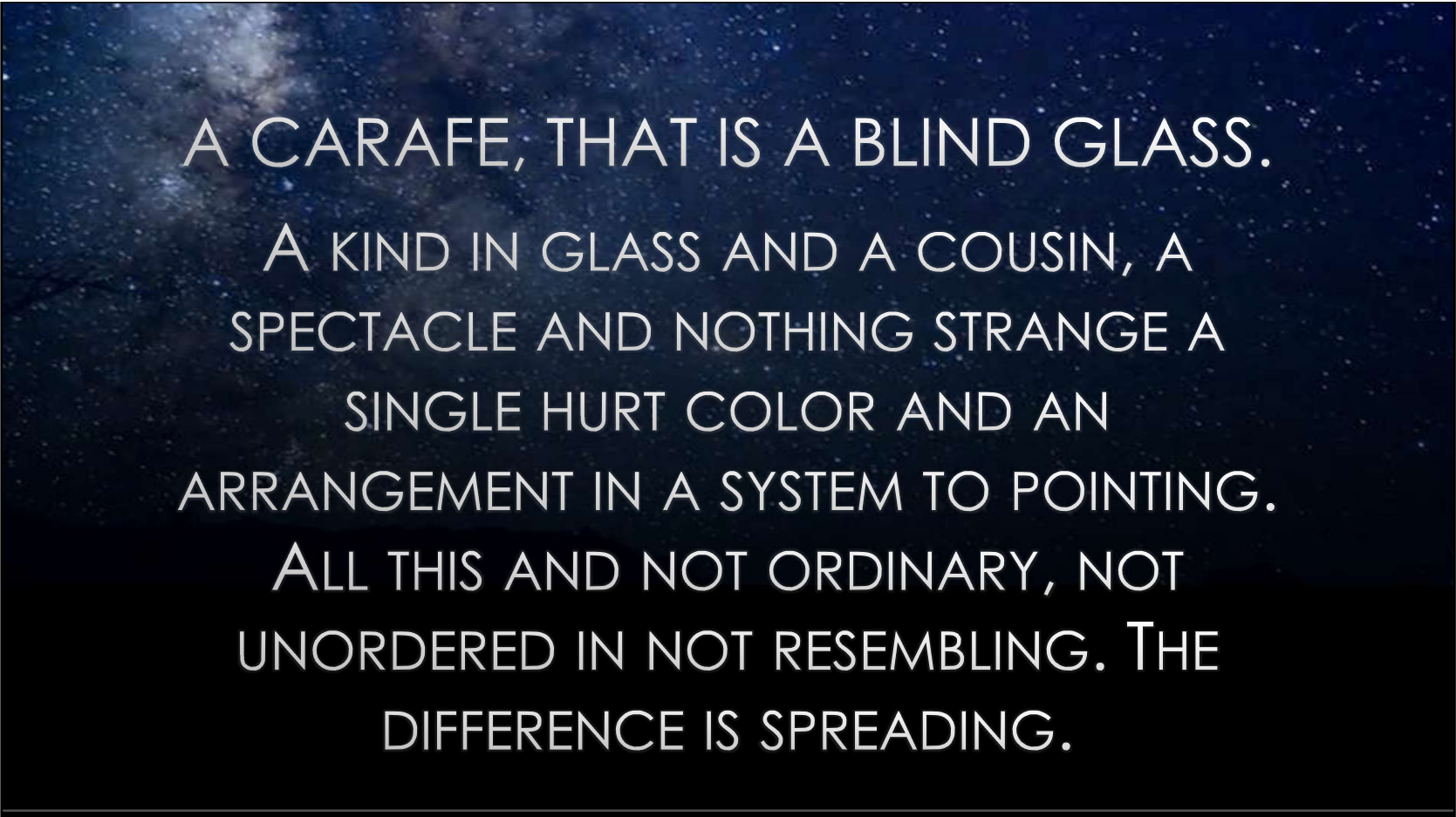


From there it's a short hop to Borges, who argues every plot is always happening;

A Visual Guide to References in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922)

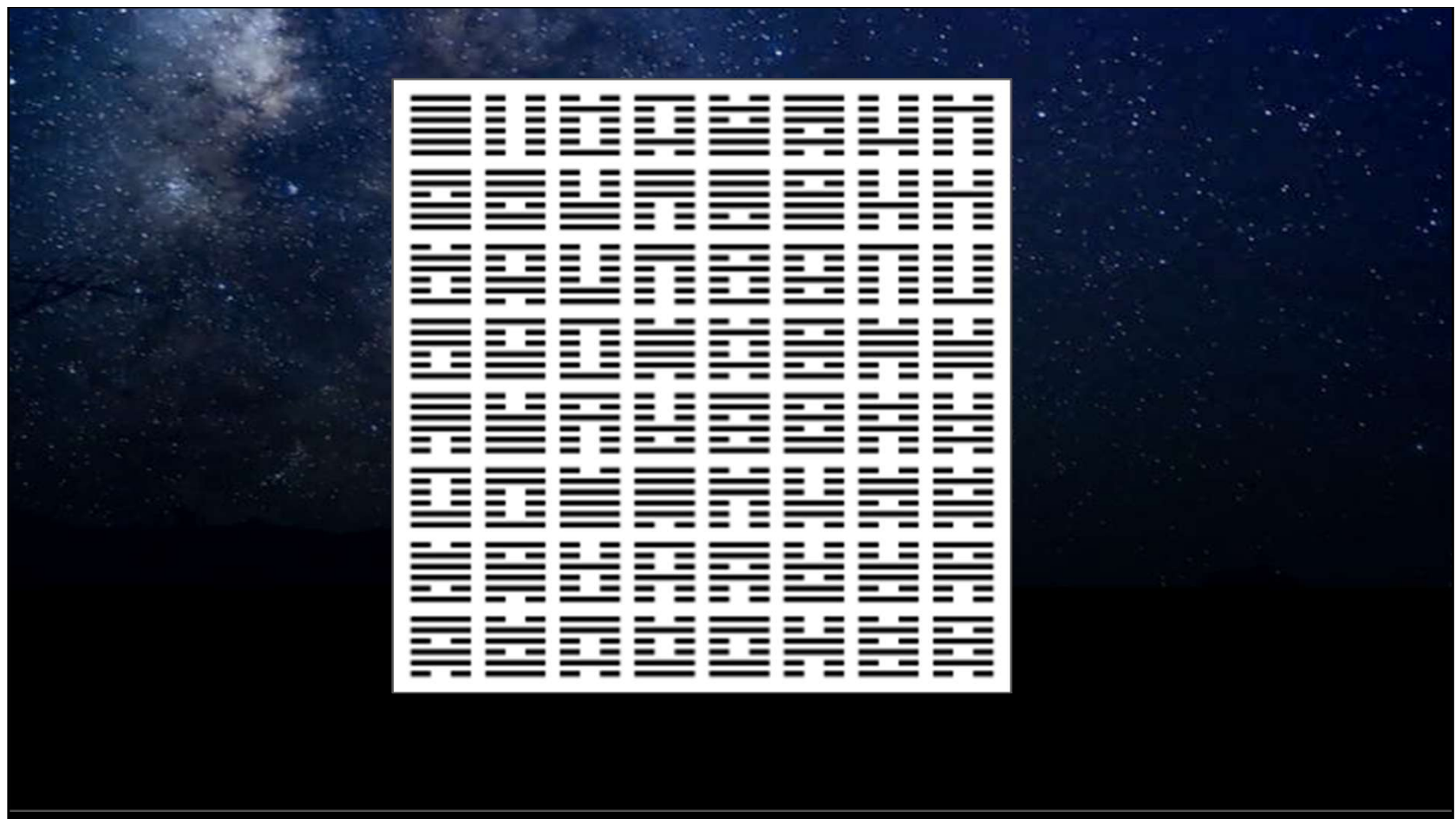


to Pound or Eliot, for whom every word was ambiguous because it was always a hyperlink into the depths of the entire canon;

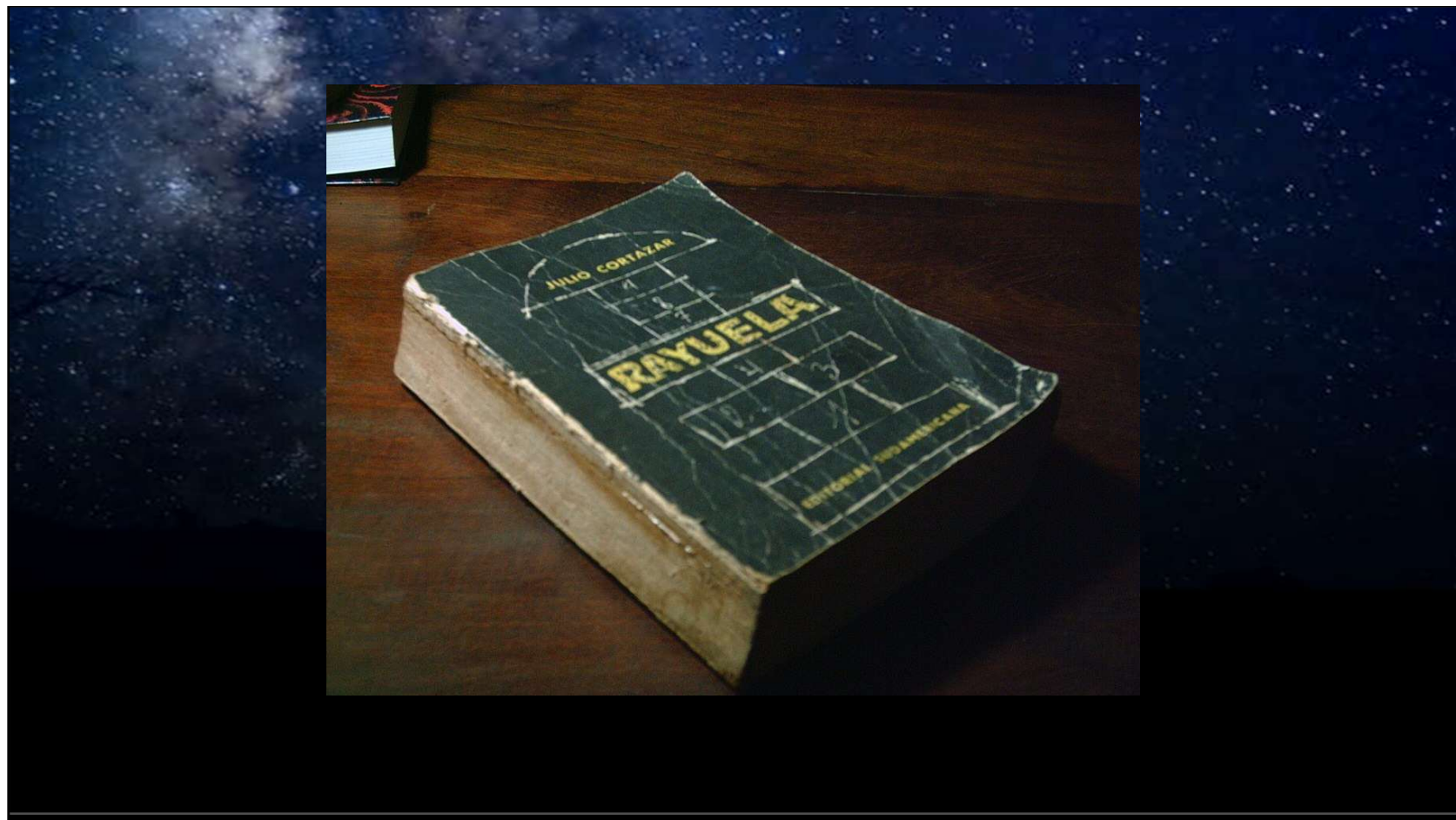


A CARAFE, THAT IS A BLIND GLASS.
A KIND IN GLASS AND A COUSIN, A
SPECTACLE AND NOTHING STRANGE A
SINGLE HURT COLOR AND AN
ARRANGEMENT IN A SYSTEM TO POINTING.
ALL THIS AND NOT ORDINARY, NOT
UNORDERED IN NOT RESEMBLING. THE
DIFFERENCE IS SPREADING.

to Stein, who implicitly argues that even the structure of word on word can give way;



to Cage, whose chance writings basically state that Stein didn't go far enough



In storytelling, we struggle with the desire to still get across our plot. One thinks of Rayuela, where the control is simply is giving us larger pieces of story to rearrange. This reintroduces the ability for us as reader to find narrative meaning, something which we maybe lost right around Stein. In a sense, we pull away from the tiny atomic bits of text and the very formalist point being made about the fungibility, unknowability, towards giving the reader some of that power back



So the progression was – authorial surrender, followed by the careful granting of power back to the reader. We can think of this as a struggle over the notion of interactivity. The game theorist Marie-Laure Ryan makes a distinction between the common form of interactivity, which might be called “exploratory”; and what she calls “ontological interactivity,” wherein the reader’s actions actually change things

PETER FLUNG OUT HIS ARMS. THERE WERE NO CHILDREN THERE, AND IT WAS NIGHT TIME; BUT HE ADDRESSED ALL WHO MIGHT BE DREAMING OF THE NEVERLAND, AND WHO WERE THEREFORE NEARER TO HIM THAN YOU THINK: BOYS AND GIRLS IN THEIR NIGHTIES, AND NAKED PAPOOSES IN THEIR BASKETS HUNG FROM TREES.

“DO YOU BELIEVE?” HE CRIED.

TINK SAT UP IN BED ALMOST BRISKLY TO LISTEN TO HER FATE.

SHE FANCIED SHE HEARD ANSWERS IN THE AFFIRMATIVE, AND THEN AGAIN SHE WASN'T SURE.

“WHAT DO YOU THINK?” SHE ASKED PETER.

“IF YOU BELIEVE,” HE SHOUTED TO THEM, “CLAP YOUR HANDS; DON'T LET TINK DIE.”

MANY CLAPPED.

SOME DIDN'T.

or heck, even J M Barrie



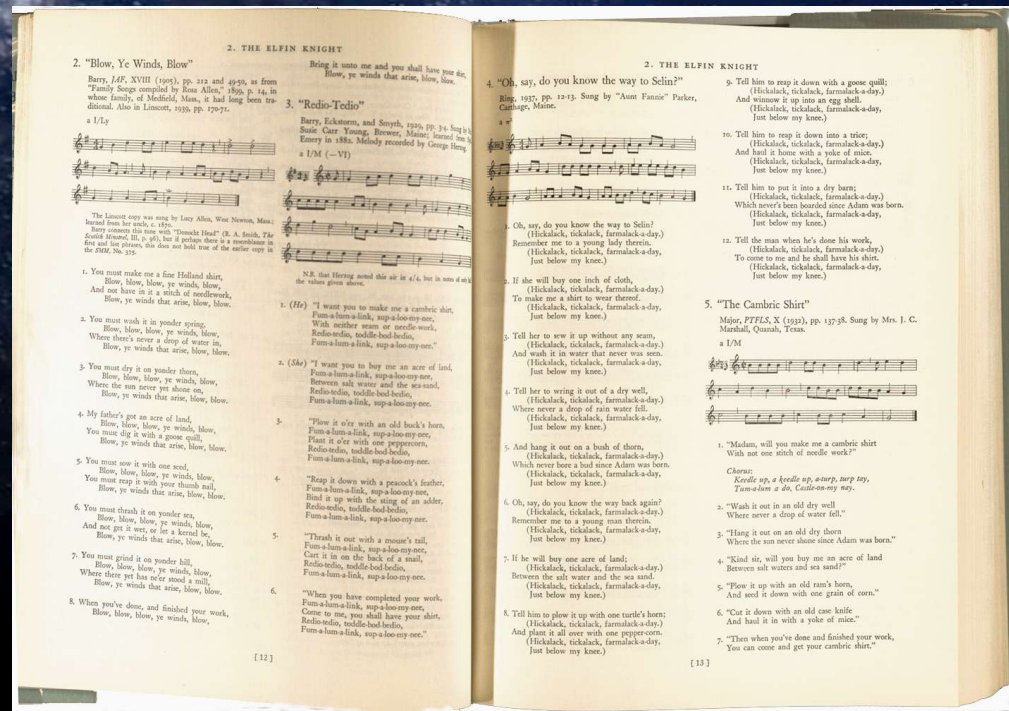
or Ayn Rand's efforts at fourth wall breaking, are an attempt to restore that agency that listeners had in those live scenarios Ayn Rand, of all people, with her play [Night of January 16th](#). In this courtroom drama, some audience members join the jury and vote on whether the accused is guilty. The play has multiple endings.



But that's an uneasy place to sit. Remember containerization. The very structures in which we hold stories are designed towards fixity. Consider film, with its tyranny of the advancing frame



In this, the history of music is illustrative
Music has undergone two significant revolution akin to that of the press... one indeed caused by the press.



The first was the transition from folk process, a dynamic method of transmission, whereby structural qualities were what allowed a story to be transmitted from medieval melody to Child ballad to Appalachian mountain song to Lomax collection and thence to the American folk vernacular.

Here we see some of the cousins of "Scarborough Fair" – "Do you know the way to Selin" "You must make me a fine Holland shirt" – "A cambric shirt with not one stitch of needle work"



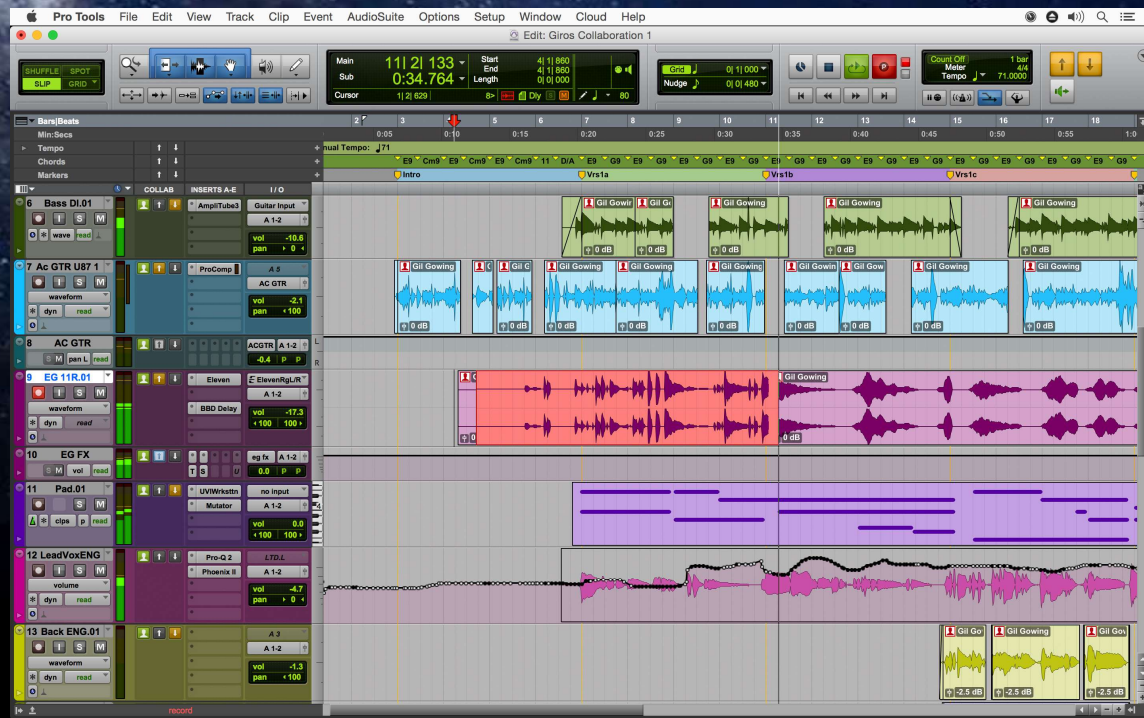
These stories remained intact not because of the container in which they were fixed, but because of the rhyming structure and the power of the incidental mythmaking they represented. The result was a tree, not an object.
 \Until sheet music.



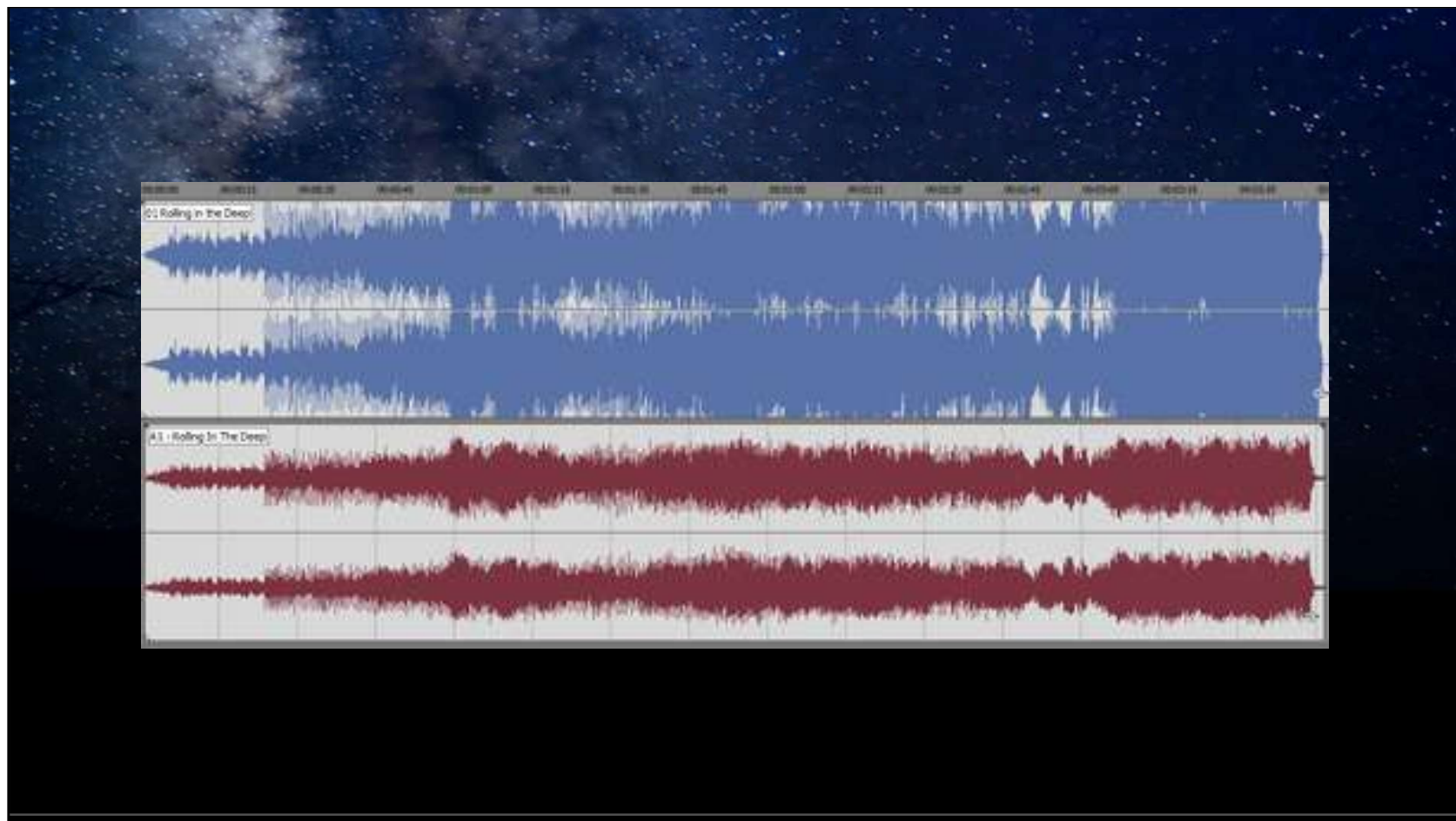
Sheet music placed a central gatekeeper on the proper form. For music, this meant that there was a silent, factual gatekeeper present. Melody and harmony were no longer to be changed by performers But that was nothing compared to what happened with the record.



Today we can look back on sheet music as a form of fixity that offers great flexibility to the interpreter – the reproducer. It suggests but cannot enforce an instrument. In the case of guitar (and its predecessor in the American parlor, the banjo), it cannot enforce a fingering, and therefore a timbre. It cannot enforce musical dynamics, a fortissimo, a pianissimo, the precise degree of staccato.



But the recording changed all that. Now the container took true primacy, slowly at first, and then more and more as a science of music production and engineering came into being.

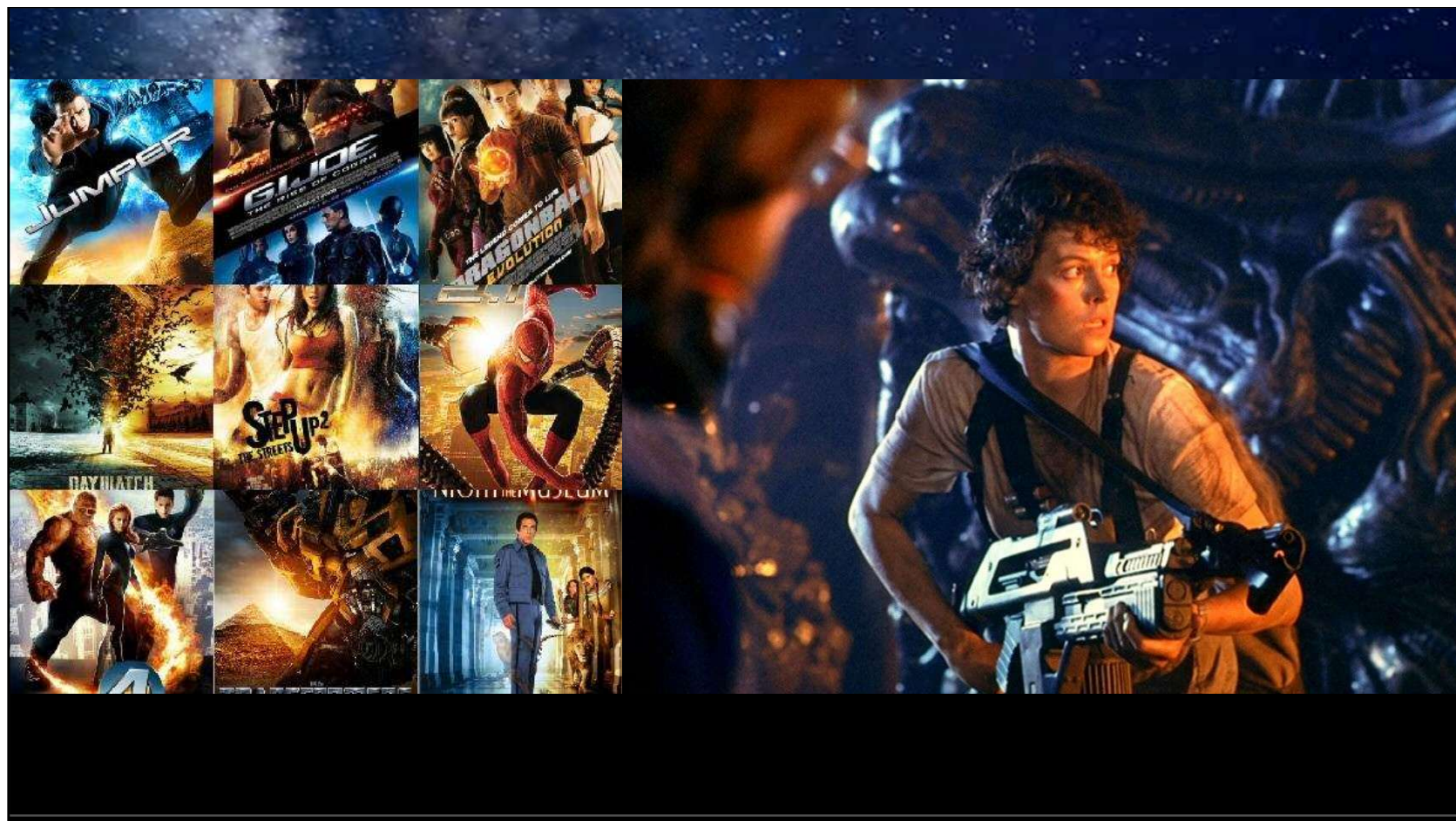


Today we have loudness wars, which are about fitting the perceived dynamics of a piece of recorded music into a narrow enough decibel band through the use of compression. The result is music that demands to be heard, cutting through other ambient noise. You likely haven't heard truly quiet music in a long time. This example is Adele's "Rolling in the Deep"

Most ears don't perceive the fact that you are being manipulated in this way. The process of containerization does this. There is now a true layer of imposition, of control, layered atop every piece of media we consume. Music producers, who shape the sonic qualities of the sound wave, are now in a position of primacy over the song's melodicist and lyricist, because the container matters more than the content.



Does this look like normal skin tone or a proper spectrum to you? Probably not,



Does this look like proper skin tone or a proper spectrum to you? Probably not, and yet here we are with this being the palette of most film, because we have found that the contrast of blue and orange is simply punchier, something that exploits the physics of our eyesight.



You're probably expecting me to talk about video games at some point, aren't you.

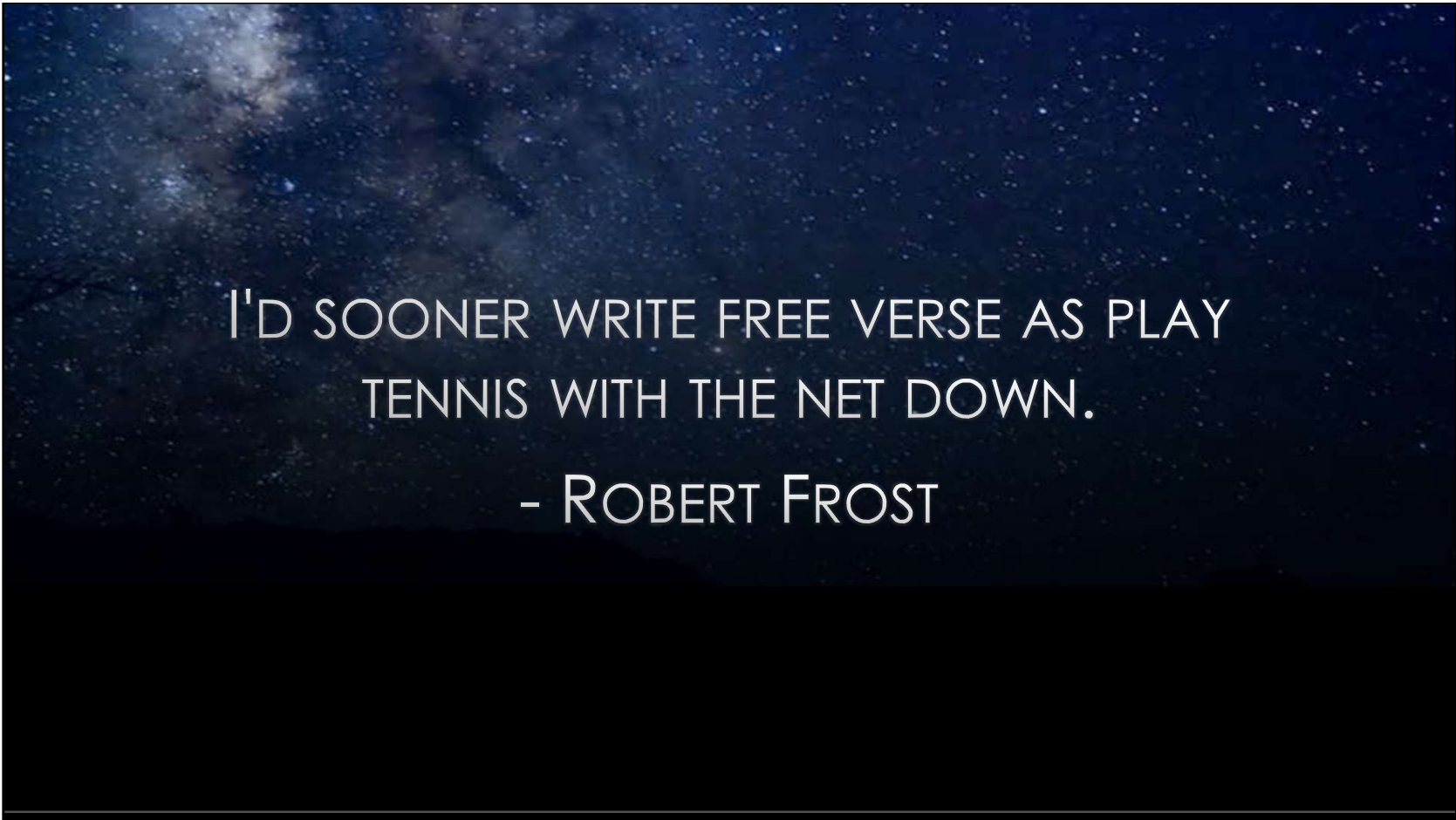
Games a bit like sheet music. But really, they're more like a musical instrument.



The thing is that games do not arise out of a narrative tradition. The oldest games have served very different purposes. A game of Senet or Ur is more likely to have been a form of mythologizing, of creating a *systemic* understanding of say, the afterlife.



Every player of Ur, or chess, or indeed of Monopoly or League of Legends, is working within a machine, one which generates chess stories, or Monopoly stories.



I'D SOONER WRITE FREE VERSE AS PLAY
TENNIS WITH THE NET DOWN.
– ROBERT FROST

Long gao, a poet said that poetry without rhyme was like tennis without a net. Now, far be it from me to claim that free verse and its many children are without structure – they simply use structure that is more difficult to perceive to the layman – but the underlying point has some interesting merit to it.

If earlier folk forms of storytelling worked in part because they had implicit structure – like various formal structures in verse – and if the efforts to surrender authorship from the Modernist period on forward were effectively about structural qualities of the work... well, games are, in their final analysis, about structure, about systemic constraints.



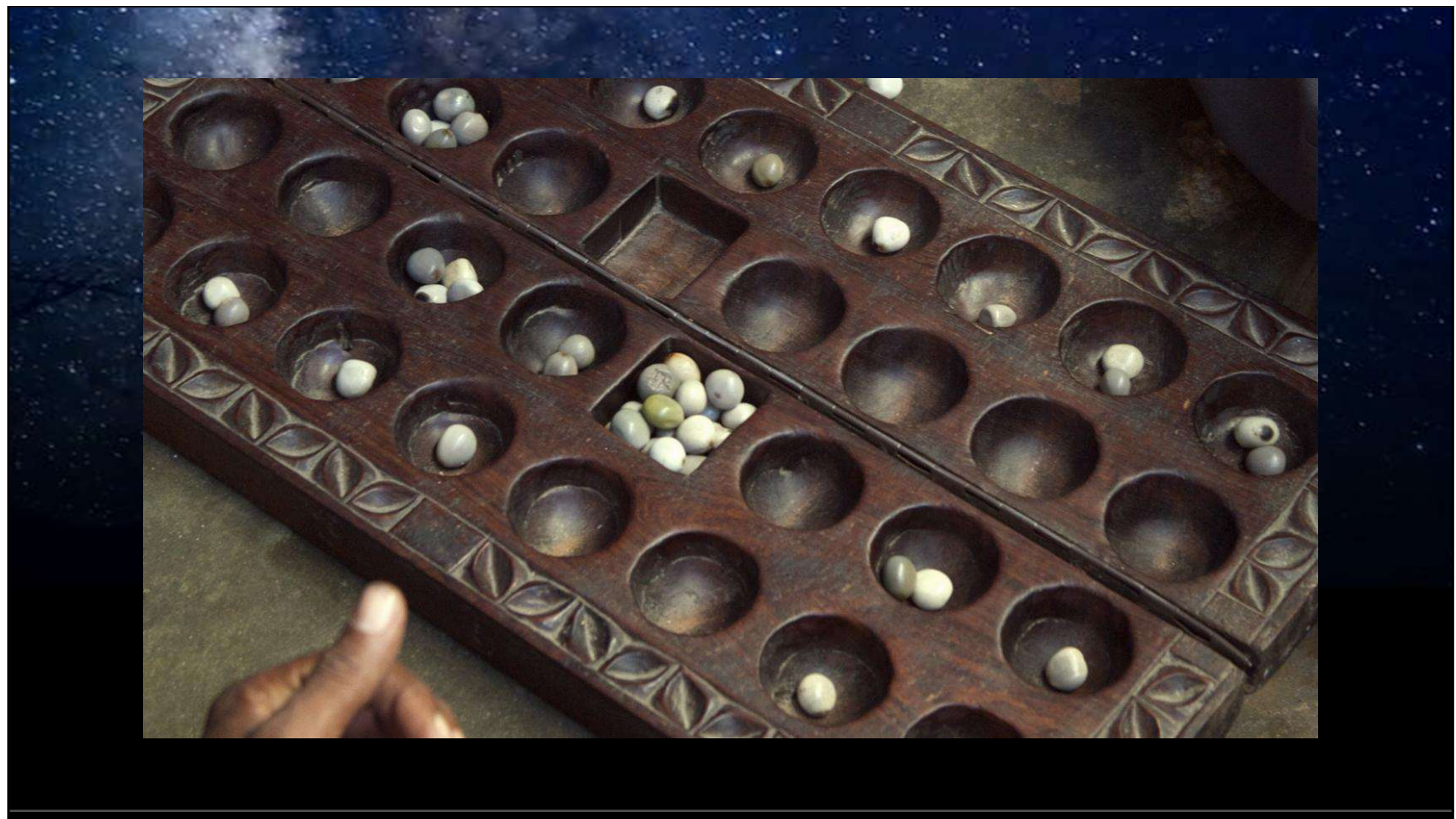
The earliest games were often ones of chance, whereby people grappled with the realities of the world and with fate. Random number generators such as dice were seen as manifestations of the gods. The progress along a path to exit was seen as a crude simulation of life, and its aftermath in an afterlife.



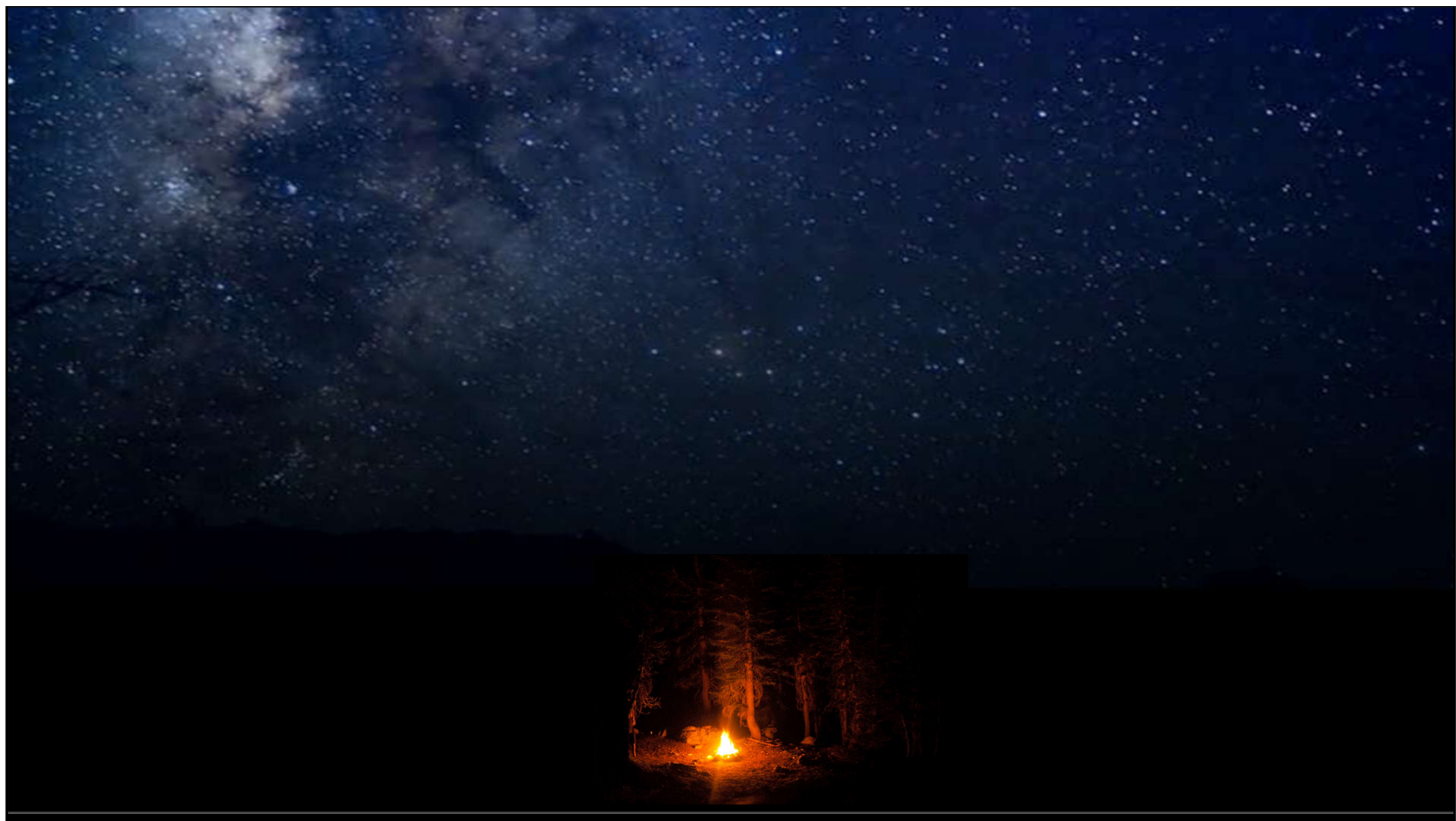
In these early game structures there is an element of *acceptance*, of a submission to class structures and one's place in the world, deeply reflective of the ways in which societies themselves were stratified. If one applies a class consciousness lens to chess, one cannot help but see pawns as conscripted peasants pulled away from subsistence level farms merely because they were peons on their master's estates – indeed, in Romance languages, the pawn is actually the word *peon*. One imagines that their poor wives and elderly and children and crops are just the squares on the boards, lands left untillable and bloodied, crops destroyed, lives too insignificant to even merit a piece on the board.



This sort of structural modeling of a very real world has always been a hallmark of games. The tafl family of games in Nordic and Celtic countries is a modeling of the jarl and his men.



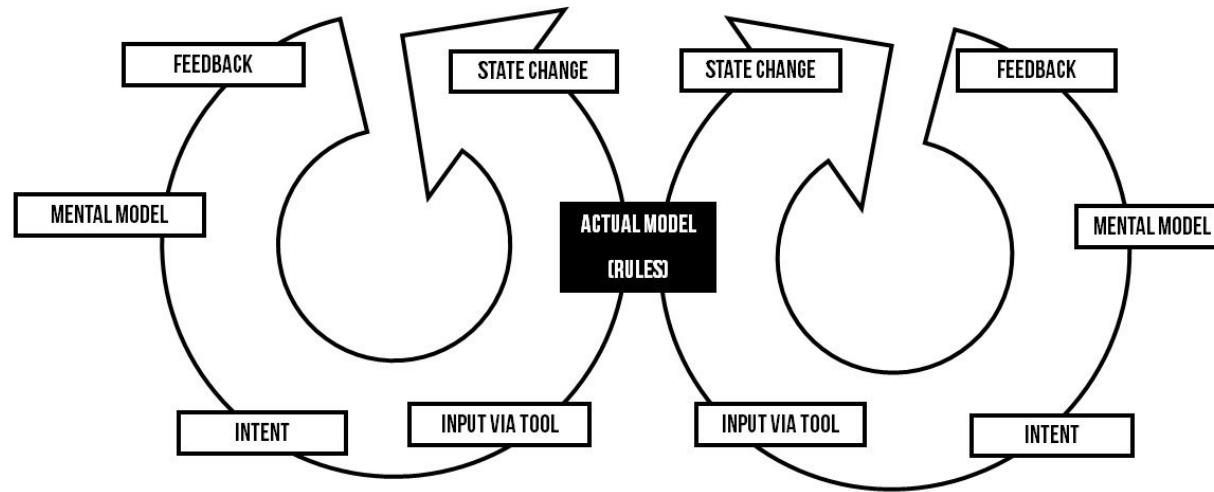
The mancala or oware family of games in Africa, a modeling of crops and rotation. Indeed, the oware variant even enforces a cultural notion that you may in the game but not by a lot, lest others starve.



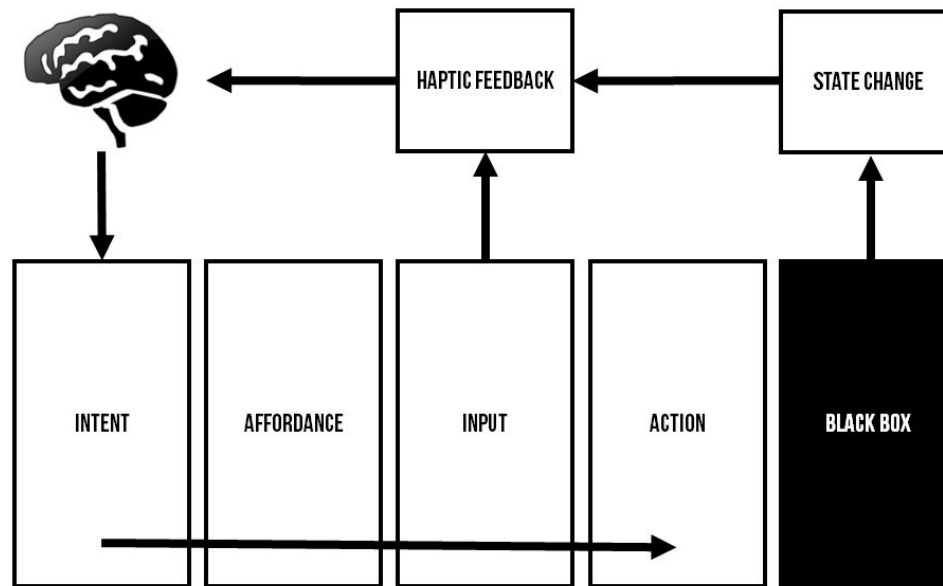
Games have always been a form of practice, then, on the player's part – but also on a narrative level. Created as they were through the folk process they challenged the notion of the authorial centrality of what we might call media or print culture.

You can tell any story you want, as long as it follows the rules. In that way, a game is like a sonnet. It enforces very rigid structure, but leaves the scope to the player, like the sonnet leaves the scope to the poet. Chess is a sonnet-making machine, and to write a sonnet is to play a particular sort of game.

THE MEDIATION VERSION

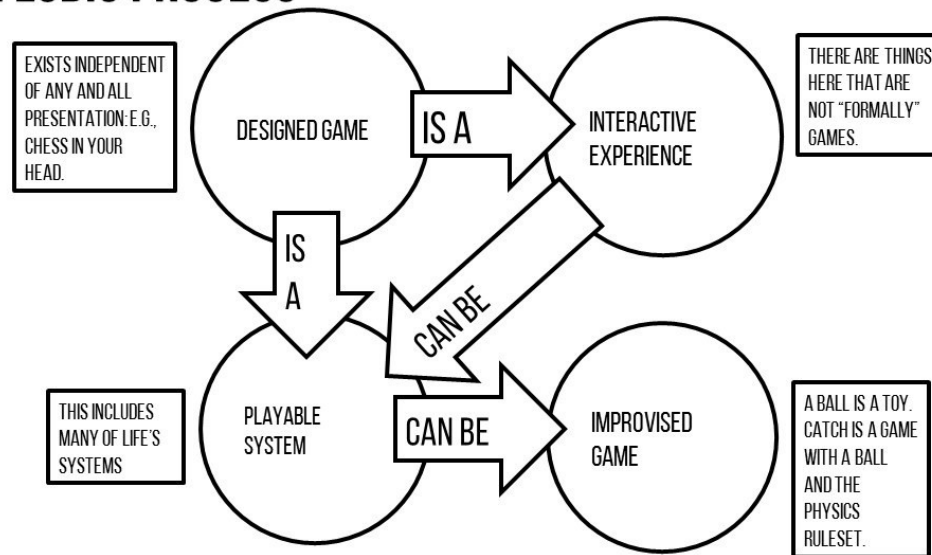


A brief discursion into how we think of games is probably worth engaging in. Games, broadly speaking, are made of rules. It typically sets forth a goal of some sort, and



Talk about game structure, yadda yadda, like always

THE LUDIC PROCESS



FOUR PROBLEM TYPES LINE UP TO MECHANICS

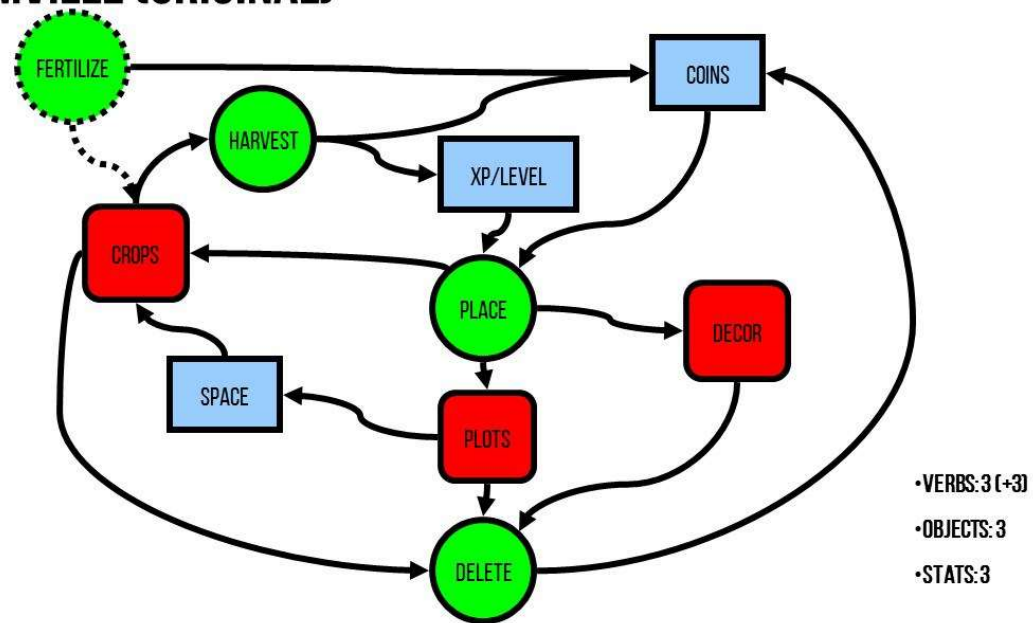
TRAINING, VERTIGO

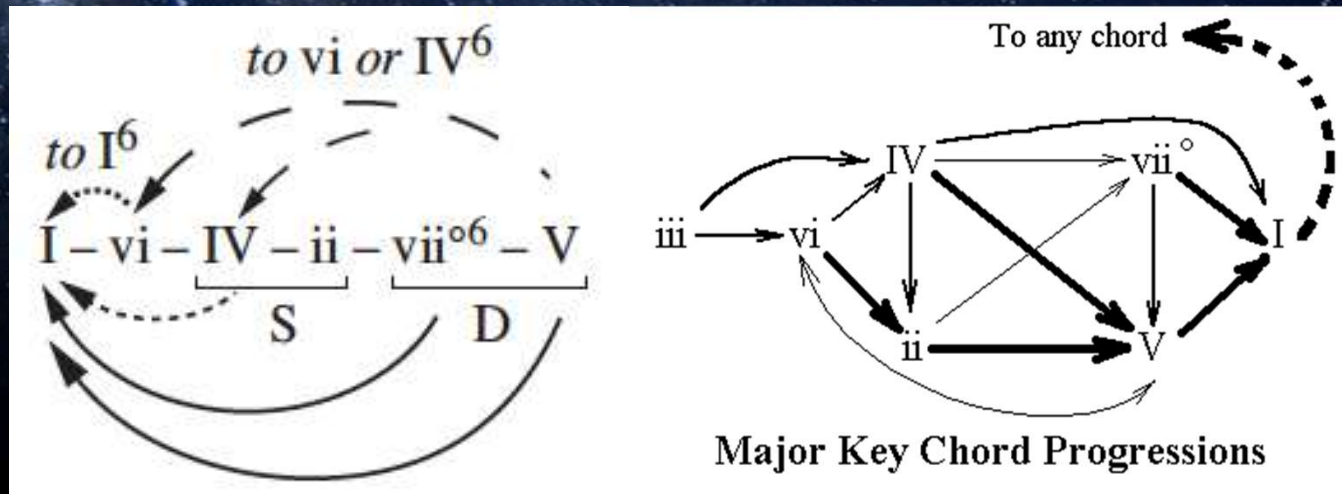
COMPLEX MATH

MENTORING, HIERARCHY,
OTHERING, IDENTITY

CHANGE

FARMVILLE (ORIGINAL)





Then talk briefly about play, set the context



It should be clear that some structures are more rigid than others.... Discuss games that are impositional, use the tools of rhetoric in order to get across an authorial viewpoint.

ACCULTURATION

RHETORICAL REPETITION

REPLAY FOR ACHIEVEMENTS

FRAMES, LABELS

IMPOSE WORLDVIEW THRU VIEWPOINT CHARACTER

OTHERING

HIGH CAUSALITY

This should echo for you the feeling of the medieval morality play!



Discuss games that are impositional in terms of mechanic, and proffer entrainment – training towards reflexes, acceptance, rote results for stimuli

ENTRAINMENT

STAGECRAFT: CUTSCENES, TRIGGERS, CONTROL

STRING OF PEARLS CHOICE ARCHITECTURE

SCAFFOLDING

SPEED AND REFLEX TRAINING

SELECTIVE AGENCY (NO CHOICES)

TROPES AS SHORTHAND



Some might argue – those who make the case about games and violence, for example – that this is what games do, and why they are dangerous. And yet – even these are deeply deeply open to subversion by the player, because Doom is still just a sonnet machine.



Speed runs, glitch runs, and the like as valid sonnets for a game

And these are in games designed to be impositional spaces! Our ability to build closed systems is pretty lacking. The human mind turns out to be way more powerful than we thought, in terms of its apprehension of systems.

APRIL 23, 2013

The Tyranny of Choice

A system is not a dialogue. In fact, it can be an instrument that specifically removes the possibility for dialogue (though thankfully, the opposite is also true).

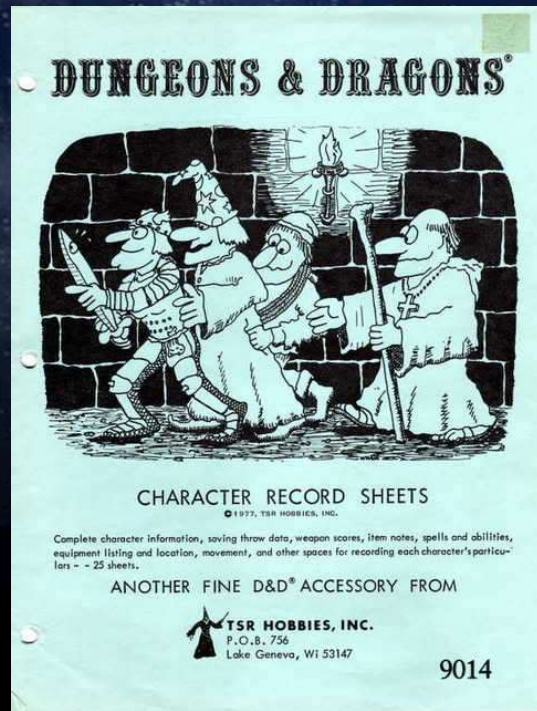
Andrew Vanden Bossche / Features /



I'm very interested in systems.

But what of games that are designed to be less deterministic? Less impositional? What of games that are created to be expressive spaces?

There is debate whether such things even exist,



but we need to look at a particular moment in the mid 70s as the moment when everything we know about narrative and literary structures was upended by a bunch of people in Wisconsin.



THE AUTUMN MANOEUVRES—OFFICERS PLAYING AT KRIEGS SPIEL, OR THE "GAME OF WAR"

Talk about the history of wargames, and thence to D&D
Von Reiswitz to HG Wells and Little Wars, to science fiction writers in NYC

THE PALADIN			—Spell Slots per Spell Level—				
Level	Proficiency Bonus	Features	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1st	+2	Divine Sense, Lay on Hands	—	—	—	—	—
2nd	+2	Fighting Style, Spellcasting, Divine Smite	2	—	—	—	—
3rd	+2	Divine Health, Sacred Oath	3	—	—	—	—
4th	+2	Ability Score Improvement	3	—	—	—	—
5th	+3	Extra Attack	4	2	—	—	—
6th	+3	Aura of Protection	4	2	—	—	—
7th	+3	Sacred Oath feature	4	3	—	—	—
8th	+3	Ability Score Improvement	4	3	—	—	—
9th	+4	—	4	3	2	—	—
10th	+4	Aura of Courage	4	3	2	—	—
11th	+4	Improved Divine Smite	4	3	3	—	—
12th	+4	Ability Score Improvement	4	3	3	—	—
13th	+5	—	4	3	3	1	—
14th	+5	Cleansing Touch	4	3	3	1	—
15th	+5	Sacred Oath feature	4	3	3	2	—
16th	+5	Ability Score Improvement	4	3	3	2	—
17th	+6	—	4	3	3	3	1
18th	+6	Aura improvements	4	3	3	3	1
19th	+6	Ability Score Improvement	4	3	3	3	2
20th	+6	Sacred Oath feature	4	3	3	3	2

evil. Fighters are rare enough among the ranks of the militias and armies of the world, but even fewer people can claim the true calling of a paladin. When they do receive the call, these warriors turn from their former occupations and take up arms to fight evil. Sometimes their oaths lead them into the service of the crown as leaders of elite groups of knights, but even then their loyalty is first to the cause of righteousness, not to crown and country.

Adventuring paladins take their work seriously. A delve into an ancient ruin or dusty crypt can be a quest driven by a higher purpose than the acquisition of treasure. Evil lurks in dungeons and primeval forests, and even the smallest victory against it can tilt the cosmic balance away from oblivion.

CREATING A PALADIN

The most important aspect of a paladin character is the nature of his or her holy quest. Although the class features related to your oath don't appear until you reach 3rd level, plan ahead for that choice by reading the oath descriptions at the end of the class. Are you a devoted servant of good, loyal to the gods of justice and honor, a holy knight in shining armor venturing forth to smite evil? Are you a glorious champion of the light, cherishing everything beautiful that stands against the shadow, a knight whose oath descends from traditions older than many of the gods? Or are you an embittered loner sworn to take vengeance on those who have done great evil, sent as an angel of death by the gods or driven by your need for revenge? Appendix B lists many deities worshiped by paladins throughout the multiverse, such

as Torm, Tyr, Heironymous, Paladine, Kiril-Jolith, Dol Arrah, the Silver Flame, Bahamut, Athena, Re-Horakhty, and Heimdall.

How did you experience your call to serve as a paladin? Did you hear a whisper from an unseen god or angel while you were at prayer? Did another paladin sense the potential within you and decide to train you as a squire? Or did some terrible event—the destruction of your home, perhaps—drive you to your quests? Perhaps you stumbled into a sacred grove or a hidden elven enclave and found yourself called to protect all such refuges of goodness and beauty. Or you might have known from your earliest memories that the paladin's life was your calling, almost as if you had been sent into the world with that purpose stamped on your soul.

As guardians against the forces of wickedness, paladins are rarely of any evil alignment. Most of them walk the paths of charity and justice. Consider how your alignment colors the way you pursue your holy quest and the manner in which you conduct yourself before gods and mortals. Your oath and alignment might be in harmony, or your oath might represent standards of behavior that you have not yet attained.

QUICK BUILD

You can make a paladin quickly by following these suggestions. First, Strength should be your highest ability score, followed by Charisma. Second, choose the noble background.

The notion of the collaborative story circl with a master storyteller and autonomy. Still hugely bound about rules – no free verse here!



The scope of roleplaying with rules, in this fashion, was fascinatingly different from the kinds of simple roleplay and just plain old “play” inherent in the basic modeling of earlier folk games such as cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians, or playing house. Those were games circumscribed around with social rules, more rules than any typical boardgame ever offers. Roleplaying games, despite the voluminous rulebooks, have less rules than the myriad social rules implicit in all of Victorian society, as expressed via a tea party.

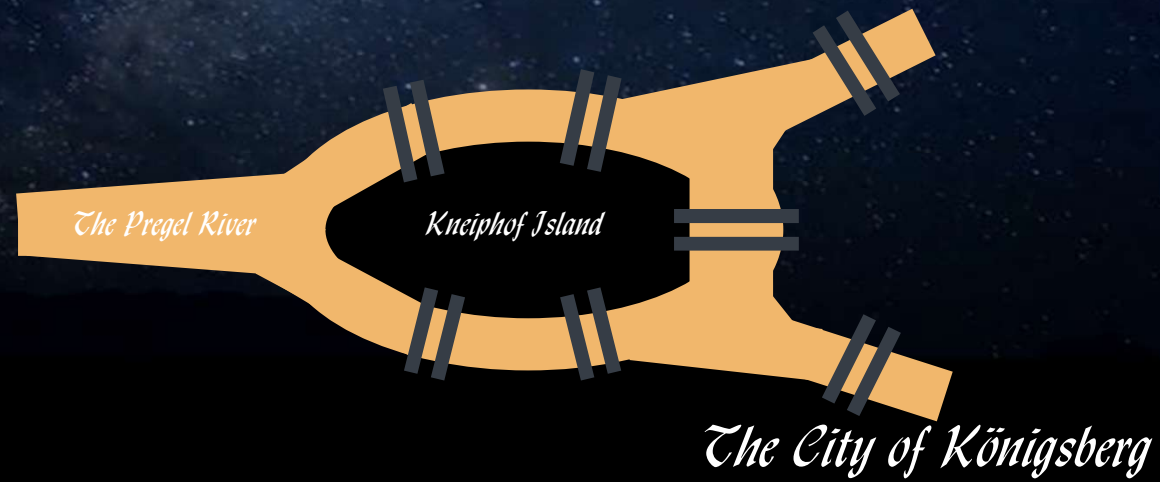


Roleplay was a revolution. Games promptly began to explore the narrative forms that simulation. Today, we see its fruition in the Nordic LARP...talkabout that.

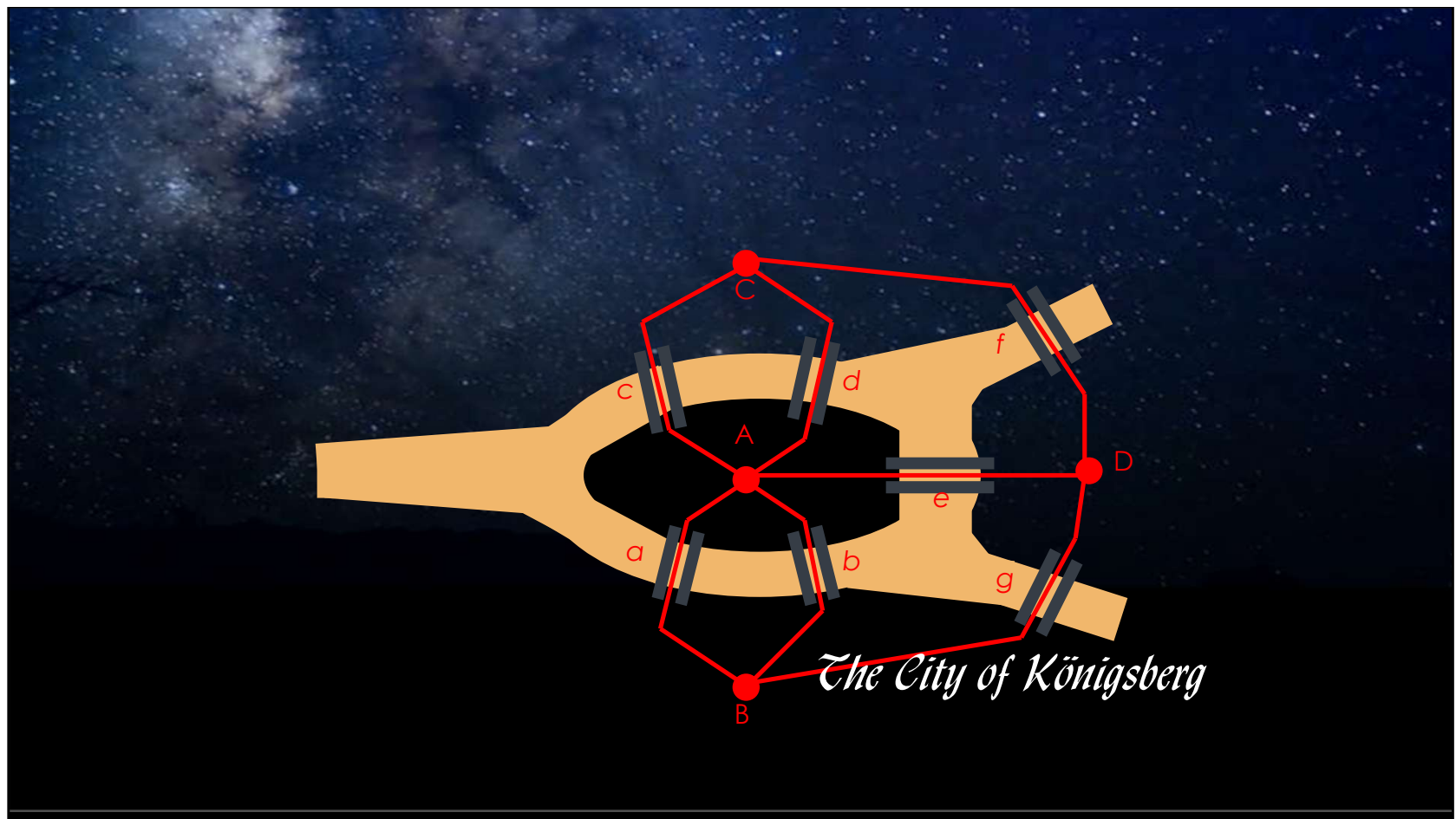
But to rewind... In short order, we got the choose your own adventure, the adventure book, and hypertextual narratives.

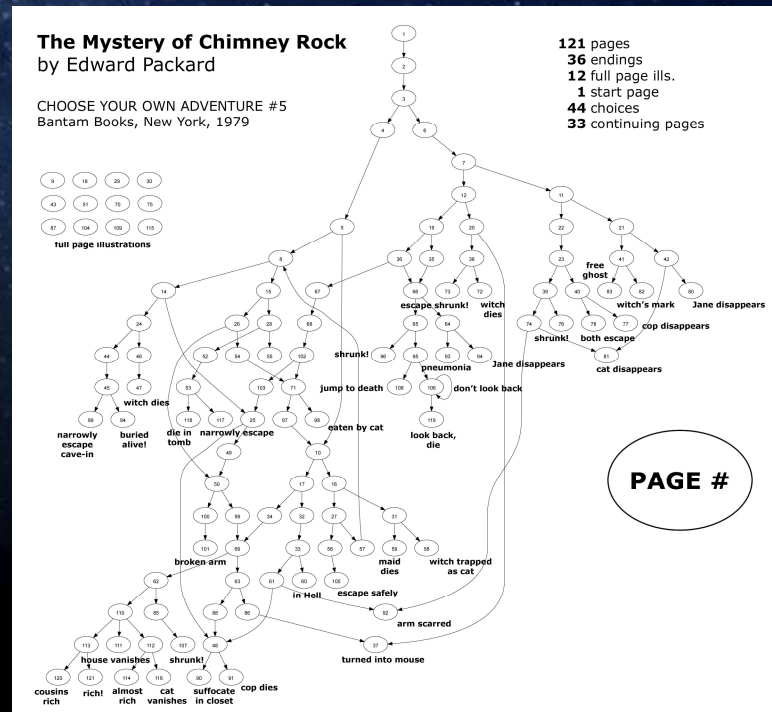
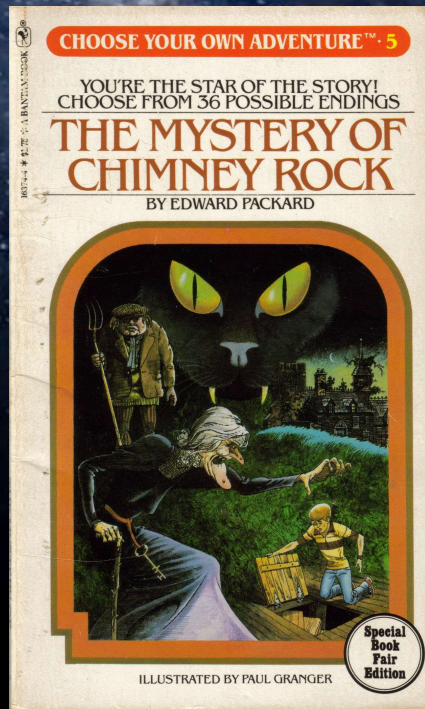
And in order to discuss this, we must venture briefly into the realm of graph theory. I do hope you had your multidisciplinary hats on today.

THE SEVEN BRIDGES PROBLEM: CAN YOU WALK THE WHOLE CITY BUT CROSS EVERY BRIDGE ONLY ONCE?

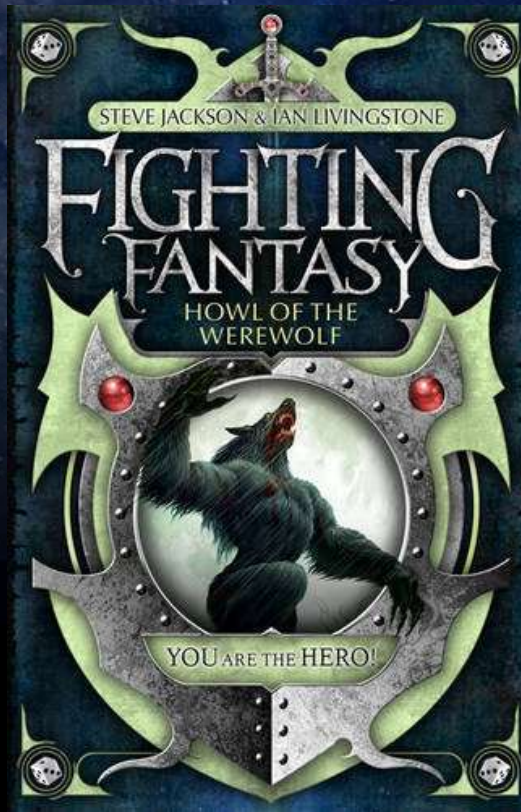


Cover the basics of graph theory

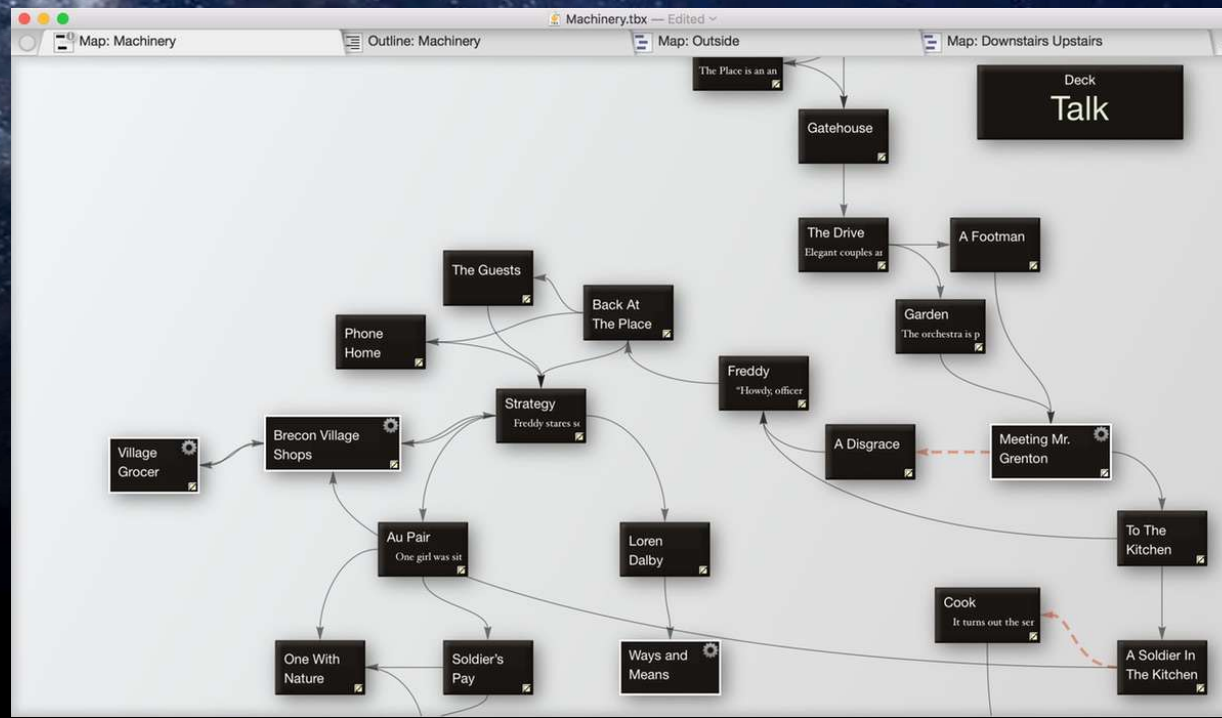




The choose your own adventure book is basically a hypertext, with a directed graph. This preserves the authorial structure. This lets you pick a path through the carefully pruned part of Borges' infinite tree.

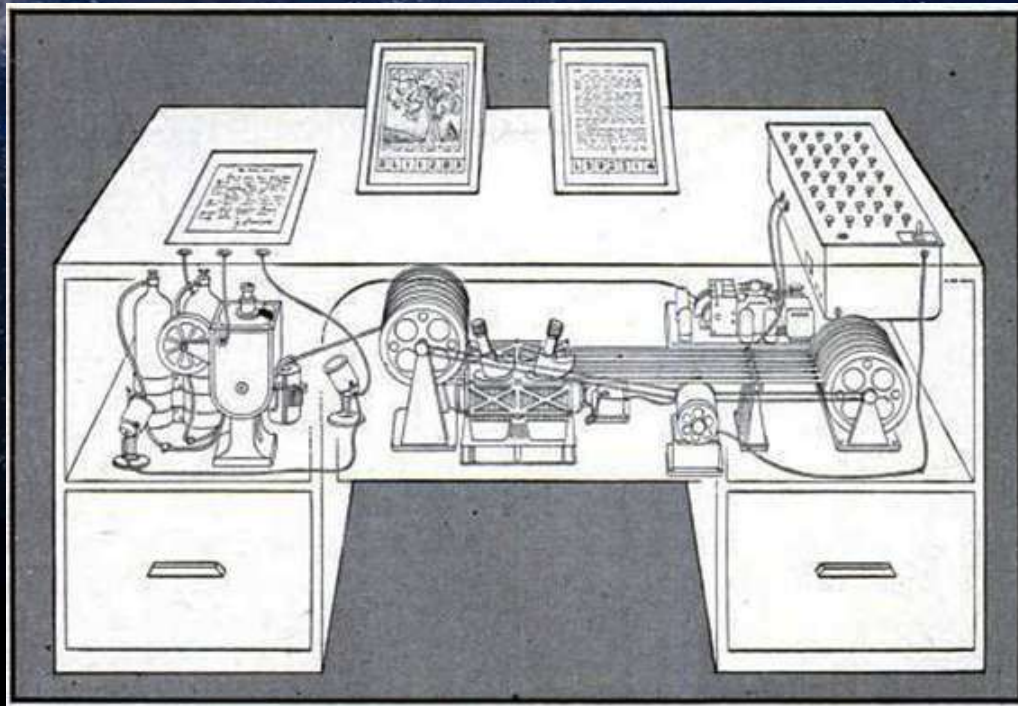


The adventure book introduces a game, a simulation layer that exists at the point of choice.



Finally, the hypertext, once it reached its first flowering via the Storyspace software by Eastgate Systems “Storyspace,” explored the possibility of structures more likethe rhizomes of plants, the structures of webs.

Mention Victory Garden by Stuart Moulthrop



This had been prefigured by computer scientists like Vannevar Bush, as well as by the Modernists. But here, at last was something that could take the place of Cage's simple I Ching randomizers. Eventually, these concepts begat the web



And indeed, while media became more and more about the containers, games dove headlong into an exploration of the full breadth of this space.

Consider what even a very simple game today might offer: the ability to move back and forth inside of a small space for hours on end, without ever advancing plot or narrative in any fashion. What sort of story is that? And yet, even the narratively focused games will typically offer this freedom.



At the higher end, games like The Sims, which is at core a simple simulation of eight variables to model a human consciousness, and a pile of props with some simple physics sims, was proven to be an incredibly power story-generation engine.



Turns out the Sims rule structure is very like a twelve bar blues, or a sonnet's rhyme scheme – neat infinite generativity, enabled and aided by the rules. – Alice and Kev

1994



Oh, containers were still incredibly important. It turned out that doing what is termed “cloning” or “reskinning” is a highly prevalent trend in games. And it’s an undeniably container-centric one.

1996



1998



1999



2003

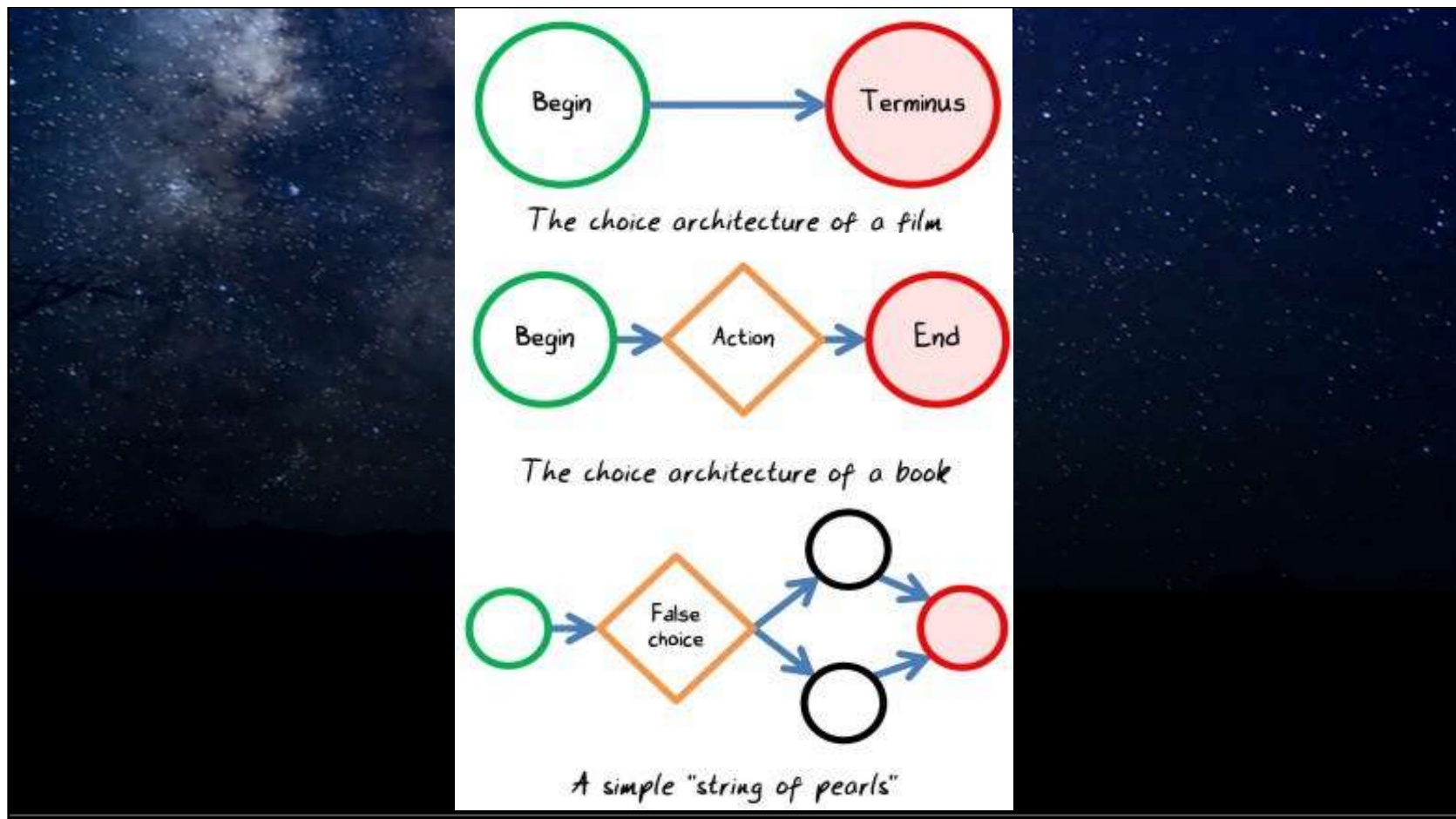


2004





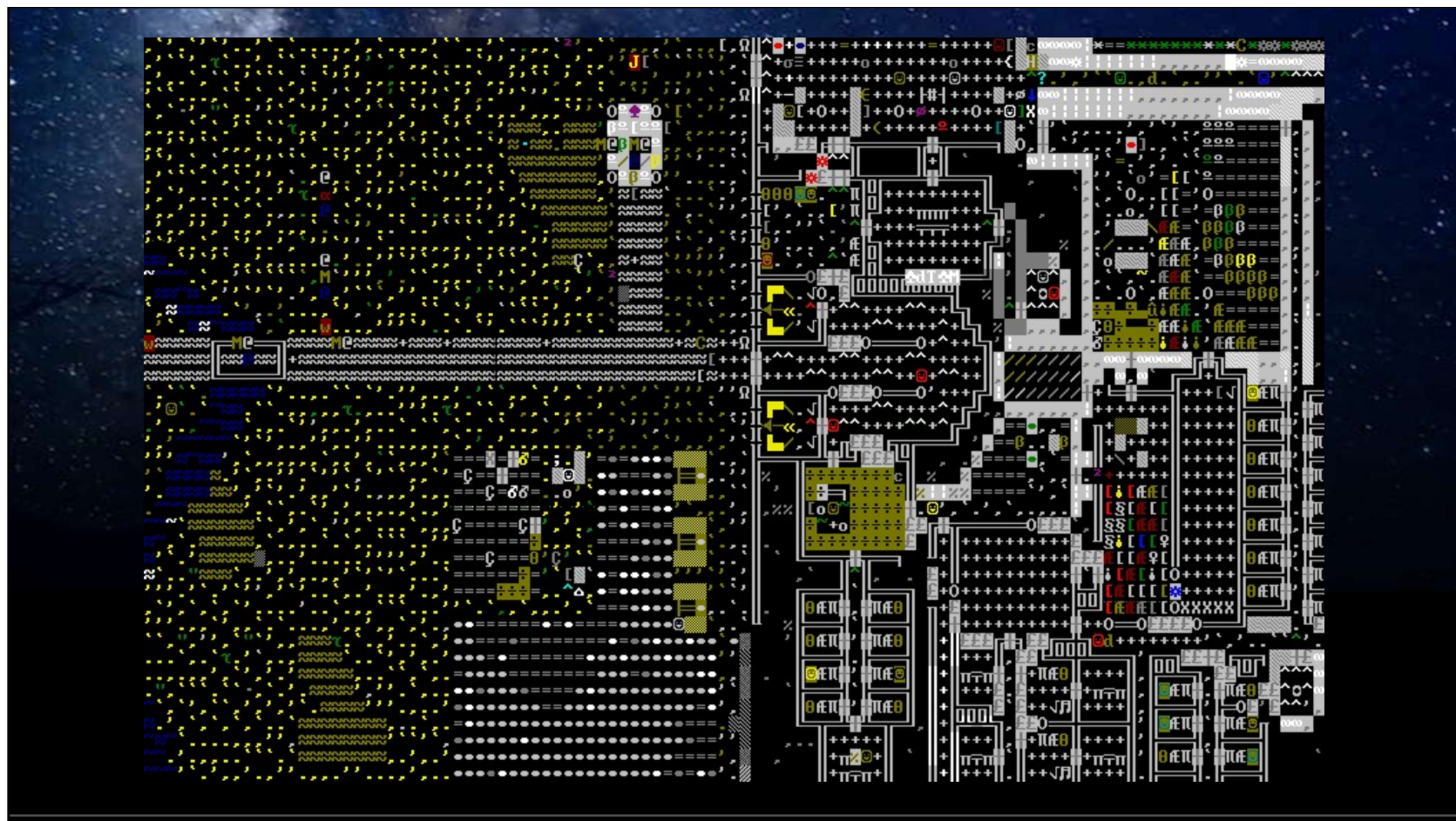
Today, the business-savvy thing to do is to build IP – which means, to find mass market appeal impositinal structures to ceonvey very familiar stories. To re-use simulation structures that are known, and to constrain them to fit the dictates of the IP rather than permitting the player to truly explore the possibilities.



From this come game structures like string of pearls.



There was, however, a vein of games that is far more simulationist even than these. Sim City.



Dwarf Fortress.



Minecraft. Here are worlds operating more by rules of physics.



In the case of the online RPG we not only have a game structure, but we have human behavior fully imported into the world. An this means the chance to re-examine our own structures, to conduct gedankenexperiments.

Alternate economic structures, The reinvention of political structures. We're a far cry from chess and its assumptions.

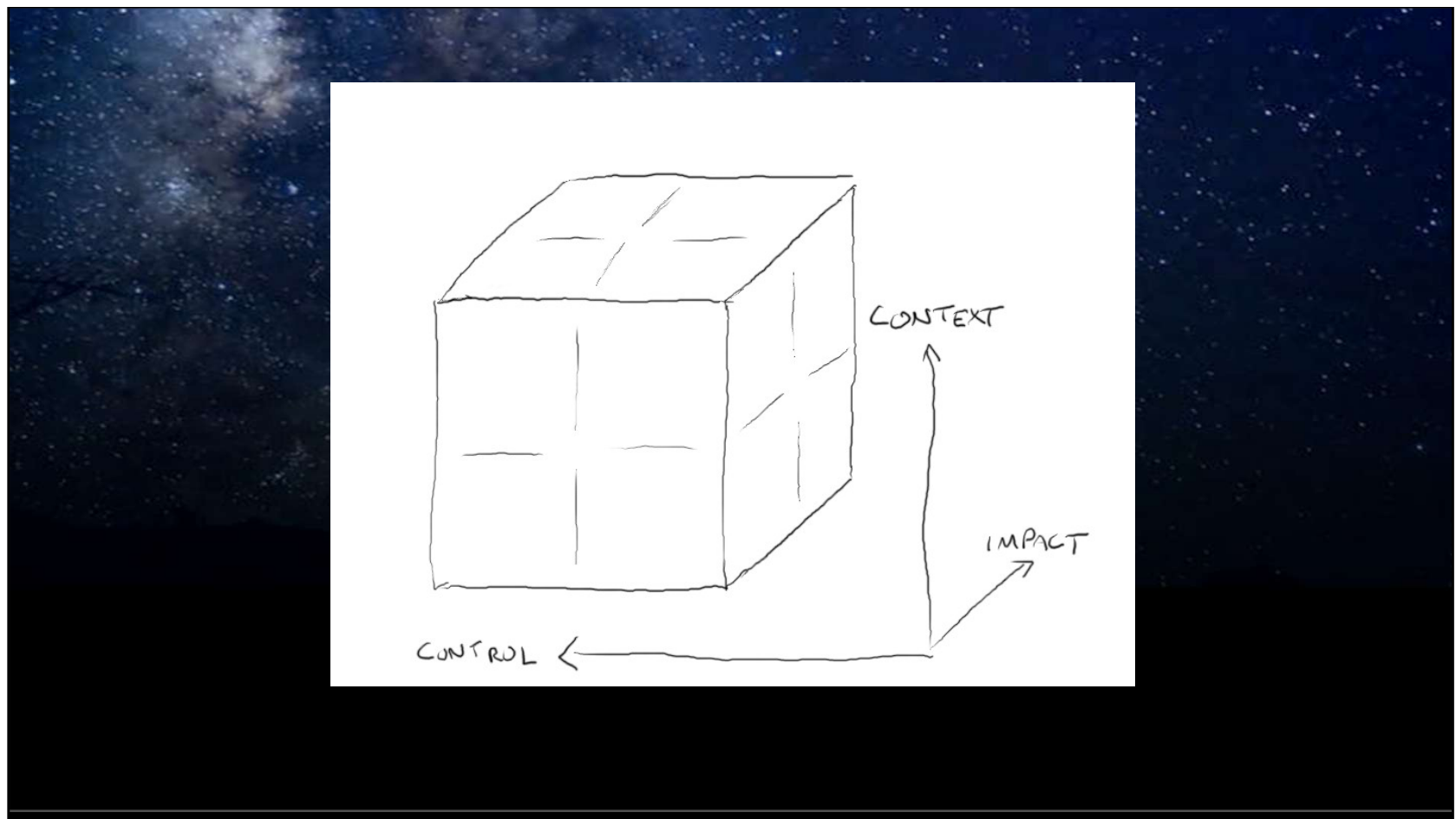
Wizards and Witches are as follows:

*1 ROY		24 Egor	Wally	47 Saavik	Ian
*2 RICHARD	Polly	25 Endora	Sue	48 Lordant	Sumal
*3 Nigel	Alia	26 Cesil	Foo	49 Balastor	Zak
*4 BRIAN	Degriz	*27 Foxy	Karen	50 Kronos	Epcilone
5 Philip	Evil	28 Denise	Simon	51 Happy	Prslog
6 Gwyn	Merlin	*29 Alan		52 Limhongch	Suntan
7 Nic		30 Gorpli	Kalorn	53 Bwian	Ken
8 Andy	Zarquon	31 Roddy	Lintilla	54 Faratol	Elena
9 Shadow	RONAN	32 Lacrima	Radagast	55 Frobozz	Felice
10 Helmut		33 Madmax	Gary	56 Paysul	Paul
11 Gnome	Nasty	34 Tremble	Exidy	57 Bytor	Wobbly
12 Eric	Wilma	*35 Century		58 Gripper	Bambi

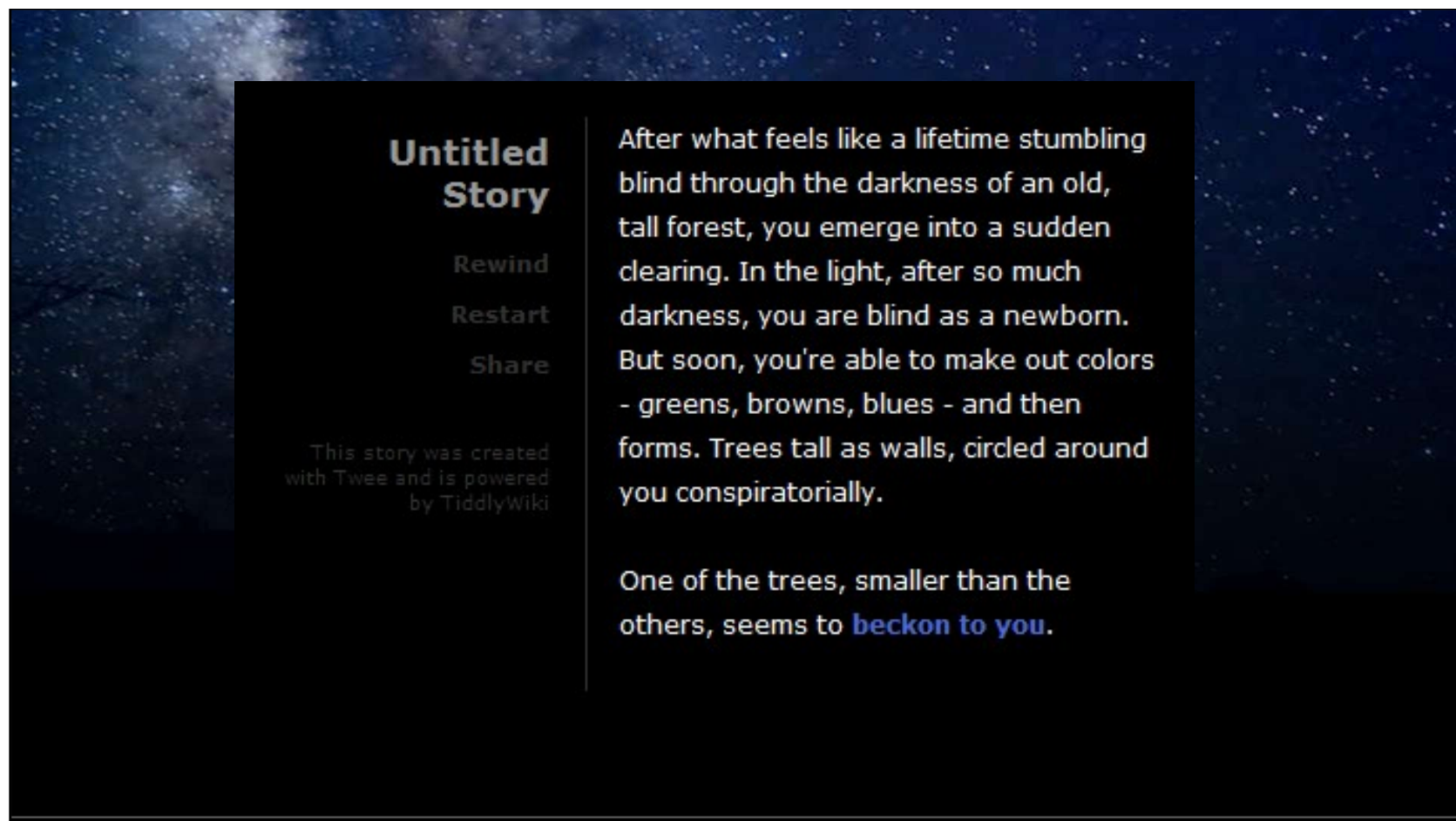
When the first MUD was created the creators chose to break class barriers, and chose to break gender barriers, quite intentionally. The children of the roleplaying game set into the form of simulation a social revolution.



With games for thousands came entirely new storytelling forms, ones that hybridized the notions of authorial control and centralized media, and the notion of participatoy storytelling. The deat of Lord british, stories of GMs



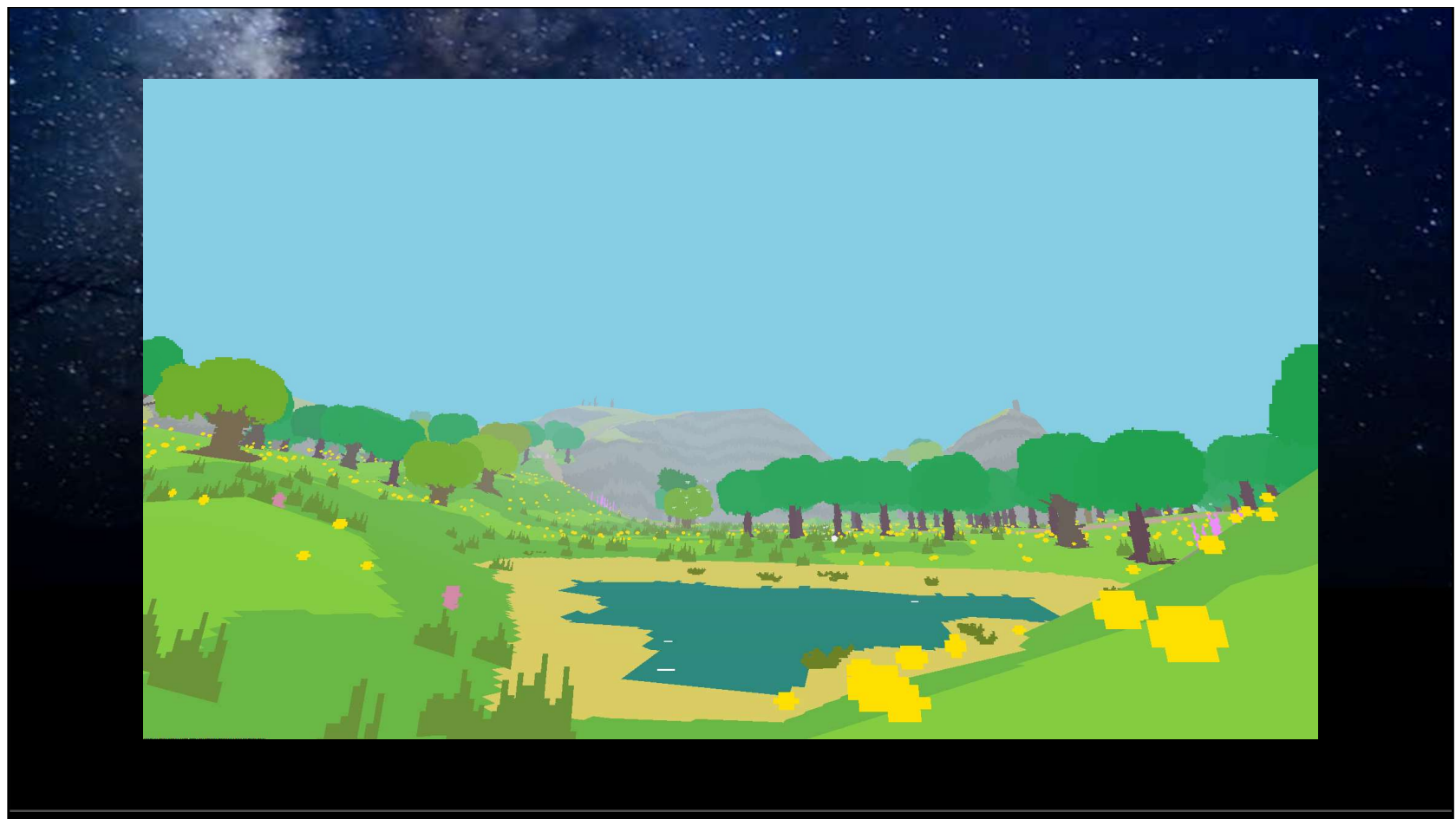
Achaea and the mod.



Rebirth of hypertext, with greater authorial emphasis.



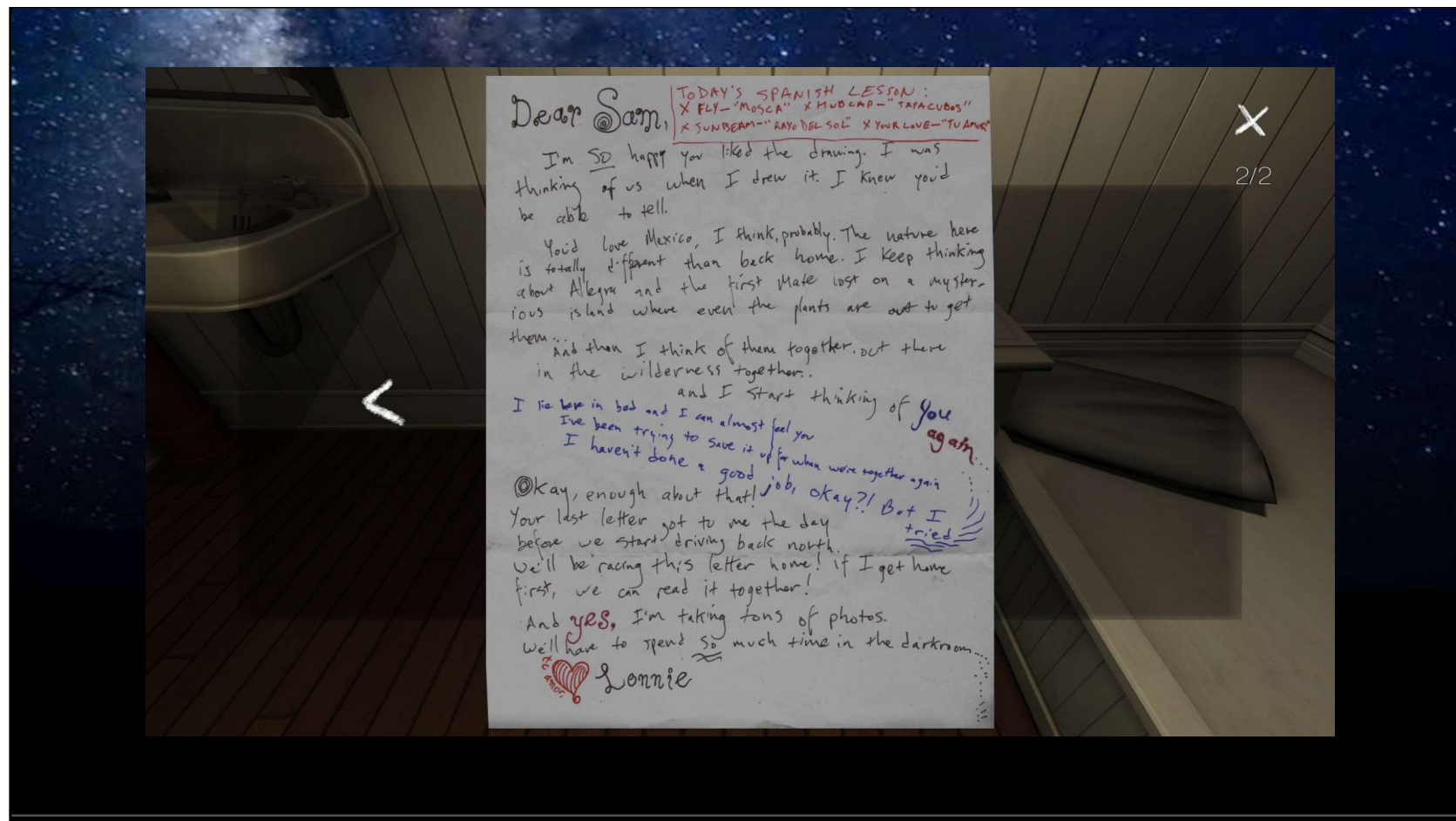
Environmental storytelling and the first person experience.



Proteus



Dear Esther



Gone Home



Adr1ft. We might think of these as the games that try to be print media; strongly authored spaces where the primary messages cannot be subverted, but the discretion is in the player's hands... irnoci that they come from small indie team because they have to be so container centric, authrially imposed. On the other hand, this is VRs sweet spot. FPX



In pure sandbox games, often not in the hands of the game designers at all, we saw the tools for players to build their own worlds. Using one ruleset, we saw the concept of modules or levels. More, we saw the nature of storytelling itself changed by these sorts of videogames, as central game concepts migrated out into by now fairly staid and authorially controlled media.



In games like American idol,



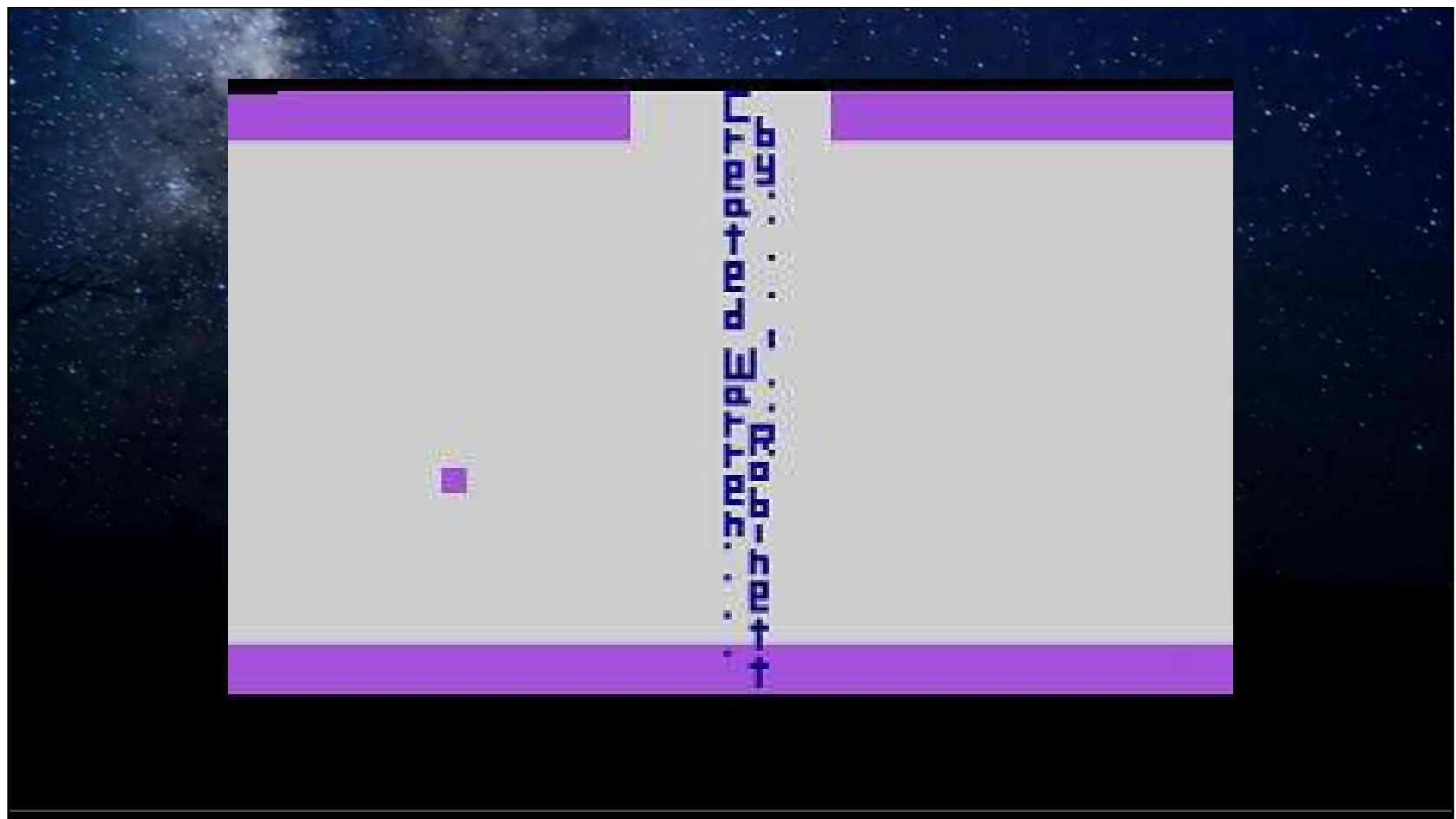
in Survivor



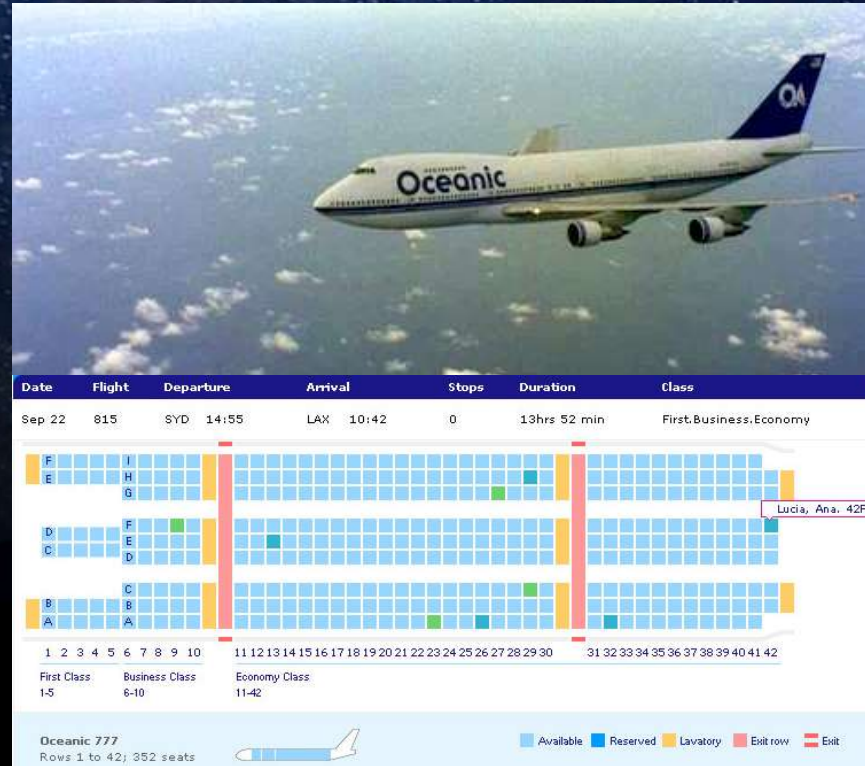
and MTVs pioneering reality shows, we saw the flow of gam ideas outwards to narrative. Reality producers attempt to channel the actions of independent agents, much ike a game master does.



In television shows like Lost, we saw the rise of easter eggs



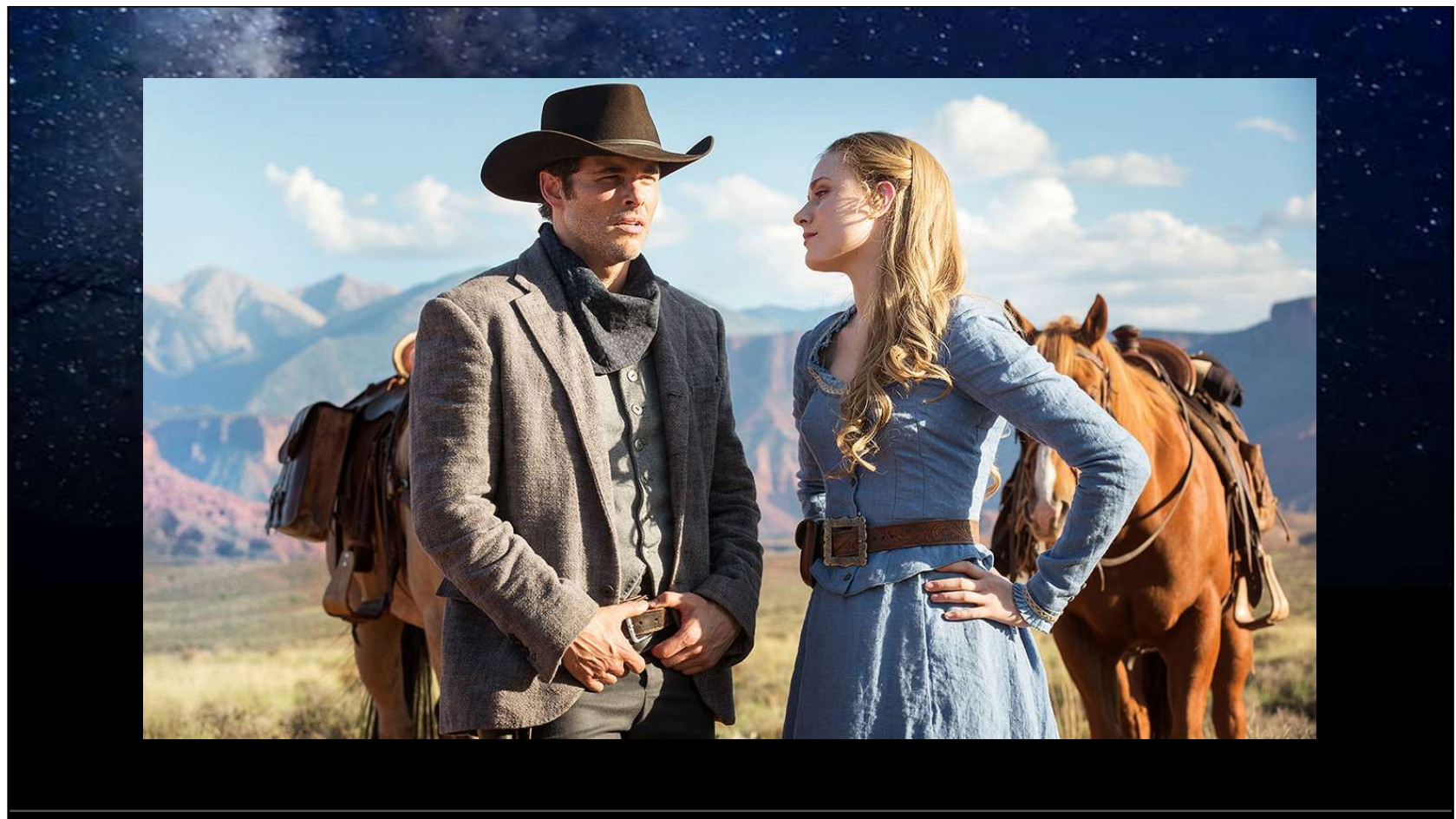
a digression explaining them



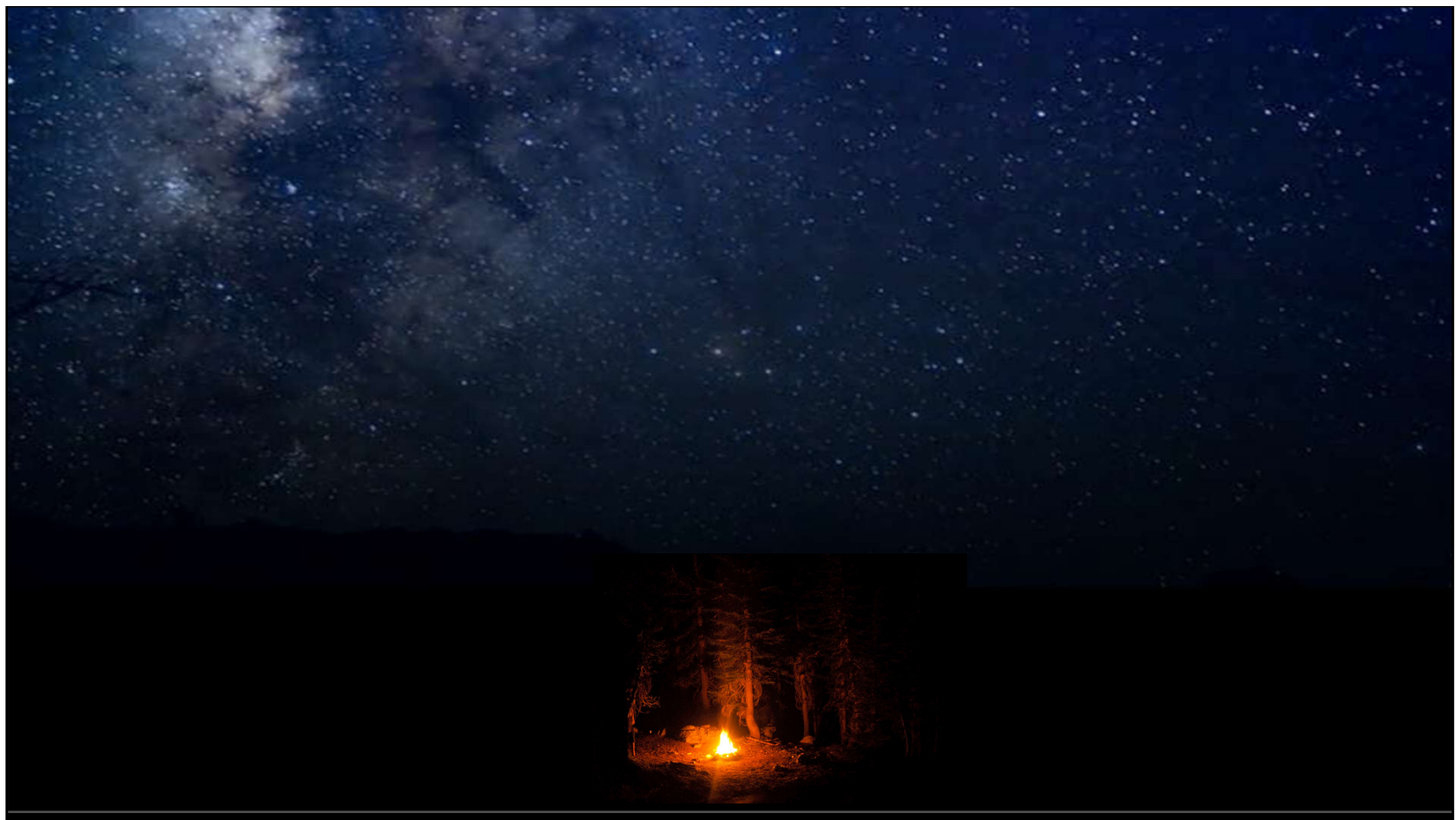
and explorable story space, reinventing the hypertextual narrative into a new form knows as transmedia.



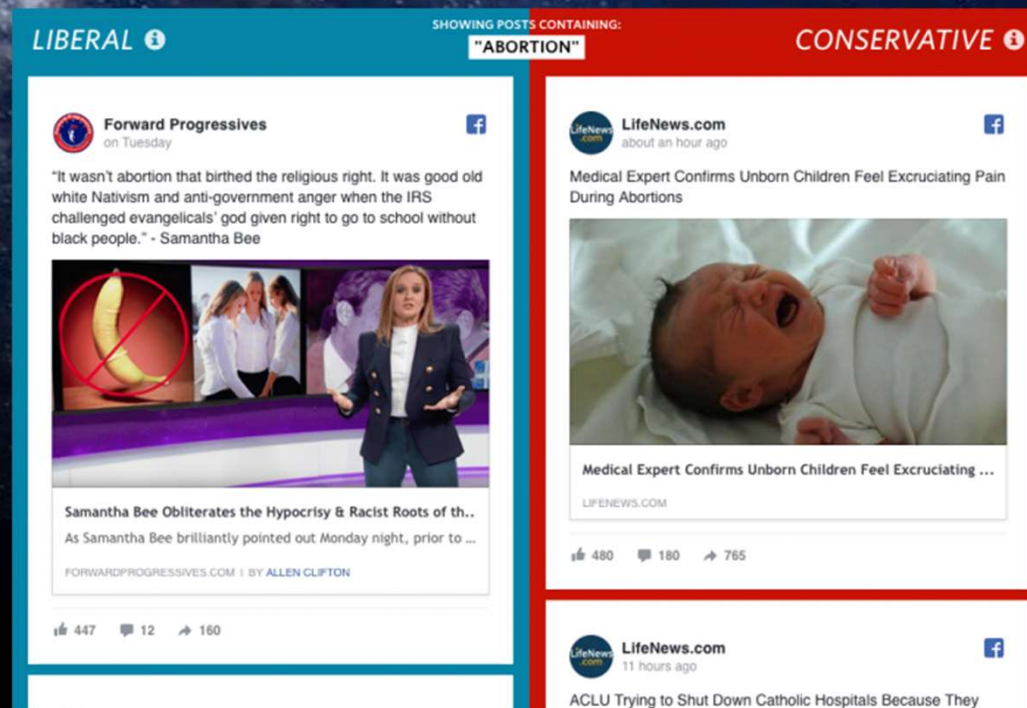
As the loop closed on data gathering and metrics, we see that the once far removed storytellers of big media are having their actions shaped and controlled by the increasingly prompter feedback of audiences. There is now another hand on the pen.



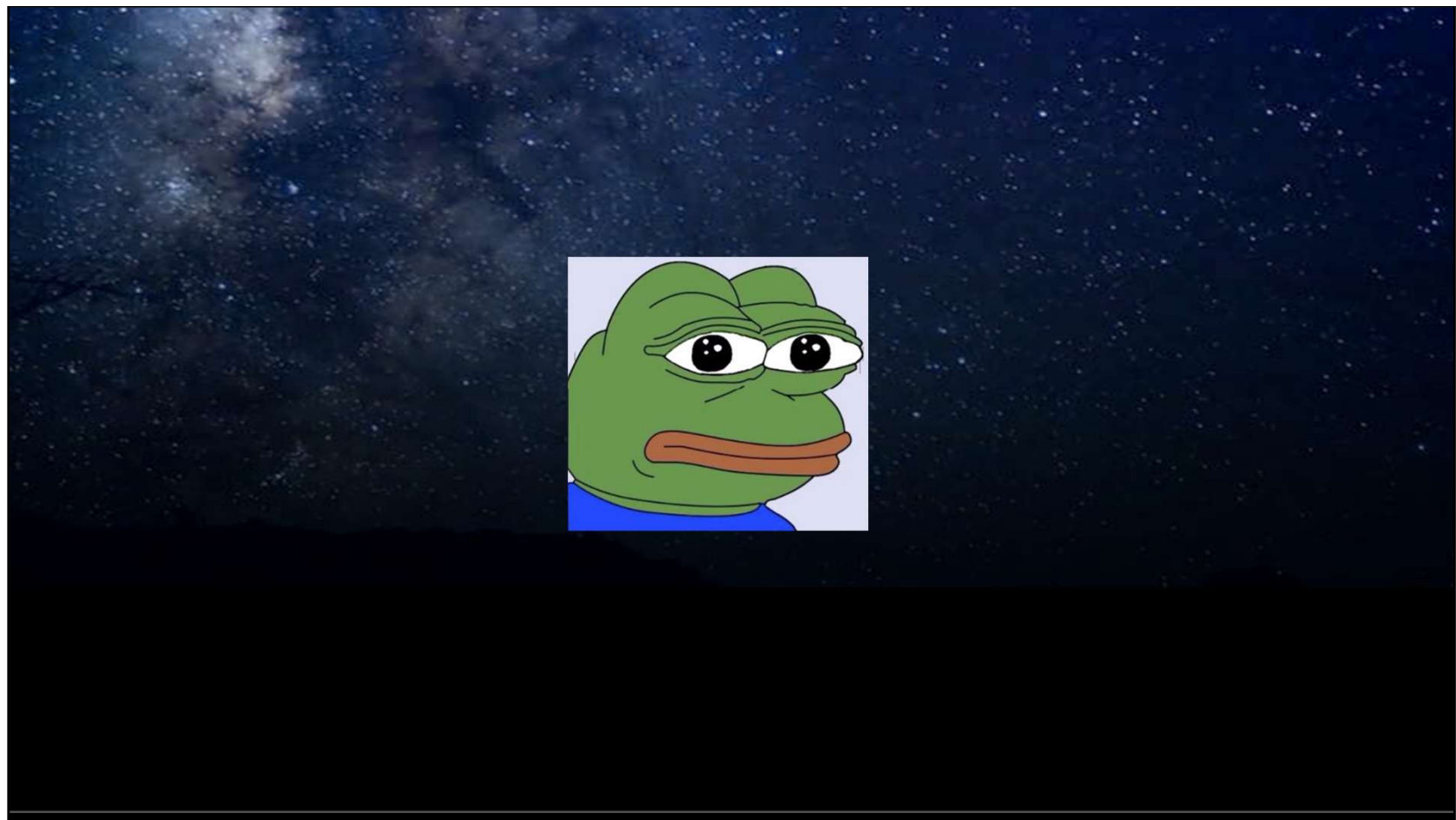
You may have seen HBO's new show, Westworld. Upon watching it, I experienced the thrill of familiarity, because what was depicted was exactly the storytelling process of an online game operator from 1985.



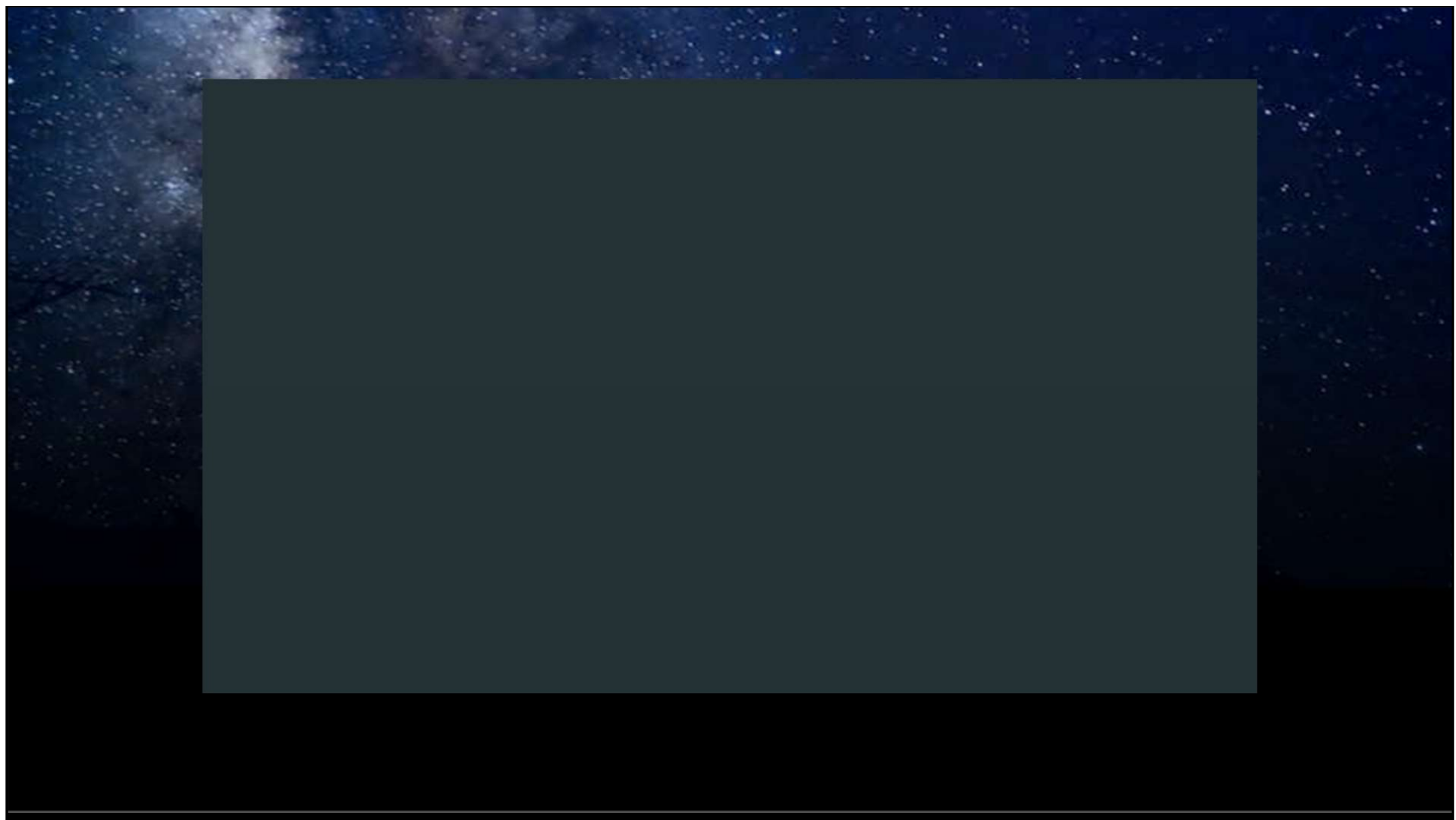
Is this a return to oral culture? Well, no. For the increased digitalization of culture has meant that more and more we live in a media landscape, and a communications landscape, that is informed by the rules of games. And this means two things: more of a web-like structure, as in the way that games themselves have evolved, with decentralized authority; and more of a landscape to game. To play. To bend to your will.



These days, the commonest use of the word “narrative isn’t the one from the halls of academia, isn’t the one from game studies either. Instead, it refers to constructed meme realities. It refers to selective interpretations of supposed facts. As in “the narrative from the MSM, the narrative from the alt-right.”



Make no mistake, these are authorially created as well, by those who have learned to play the new simulation game of how many clicks and likes and retweets. There is a new form of mythmaking, of storytelling once again shaping our fundamental understandings of the world, and it's been executed by a new type of author who use memes as their novels, the Internet as their pen, and people as their very ink.



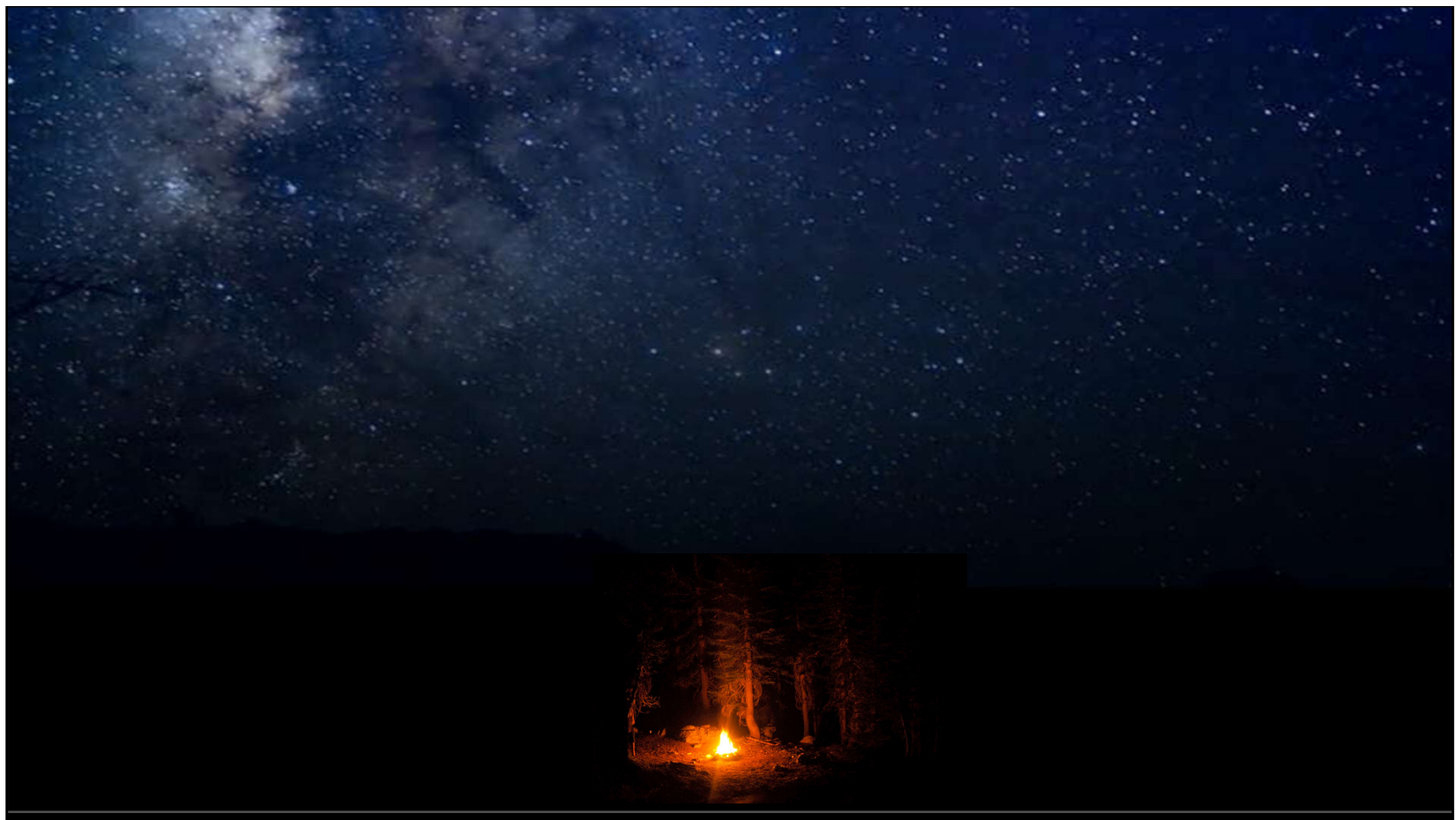
Thus have games wrought in the end; the internet has no gamemaster. But it does have rules. The great virtue of games, the fact that they teach us to see systems as tractable, and situations as challenges to overcome, and the environment itself as arbitrary constraints, is also contributory to the internet discourse we see today.



Games also have solutions to offer, in their notions of fair play, of sportsmanship, in their ideas of game masters and referees, and in their resolute faith in the rules that hold something together.



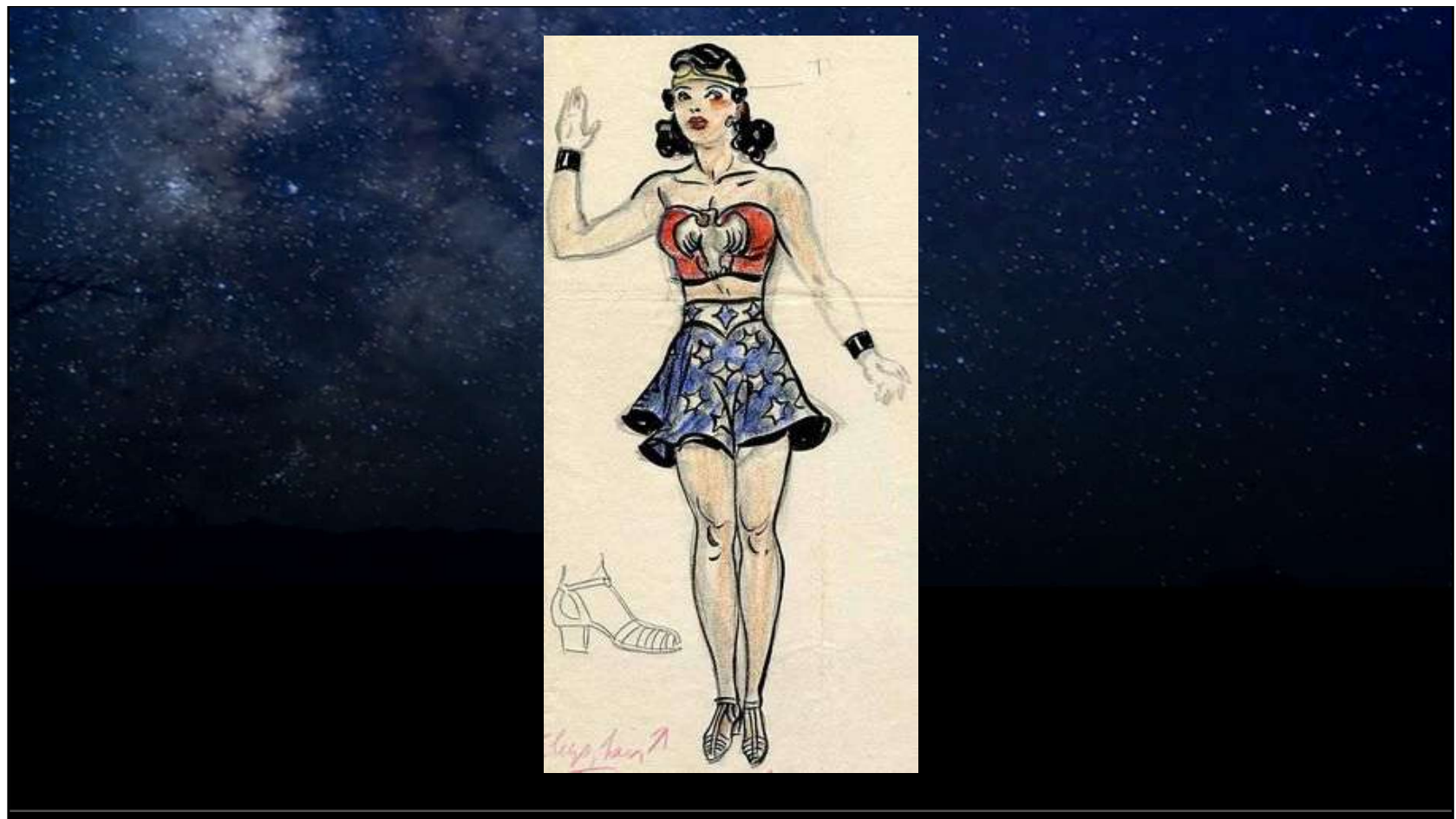
These are challenges that games people have had to deal with, running online communities larger than cities, with a heck of a lot more fairness and focus on the fun than say, Facebook.



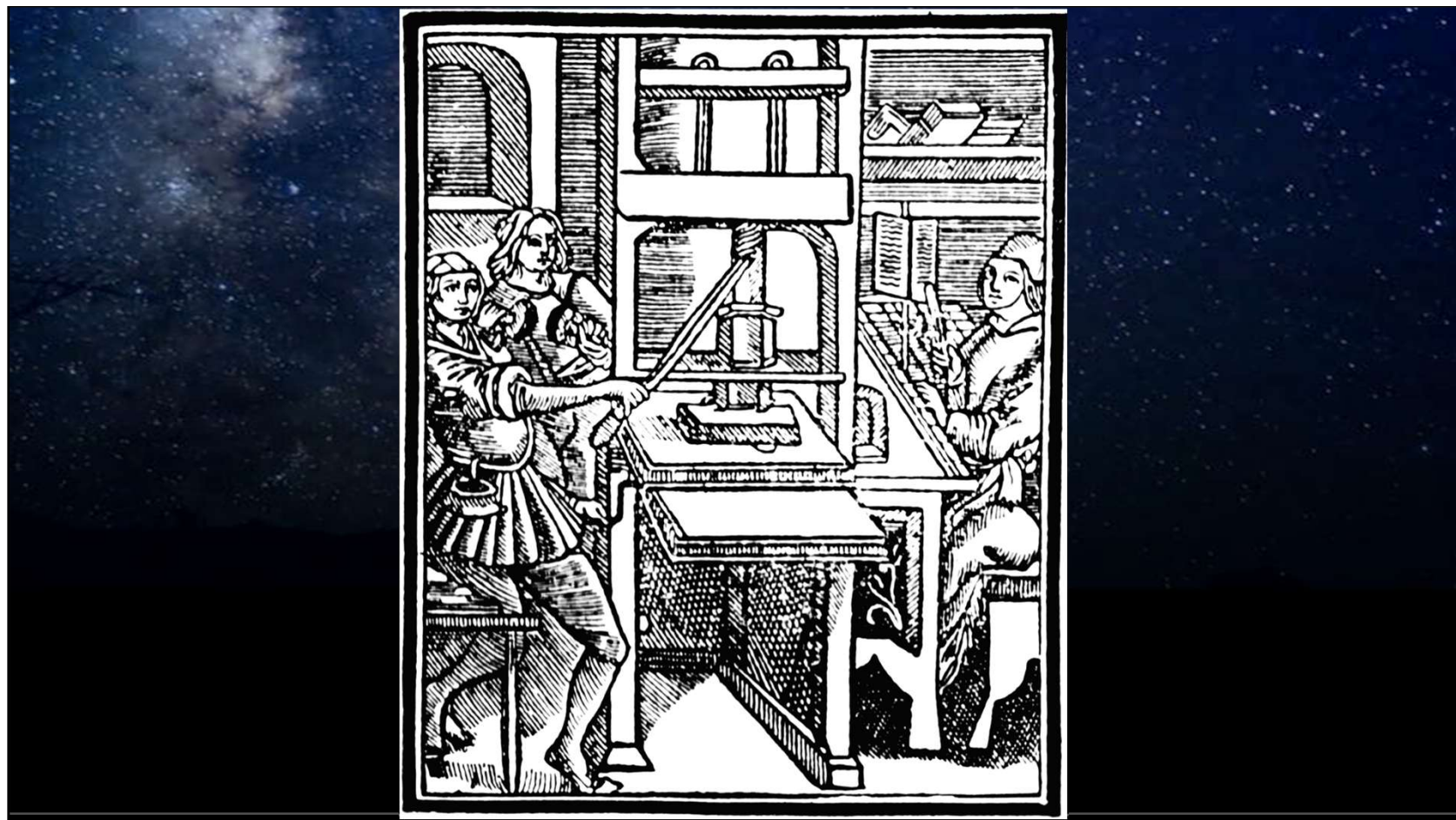
Either way, the digital bards are here, singing their siren song. Their storytelling structures are now the new paradigm, a change as large as the printing press or the audio recording.



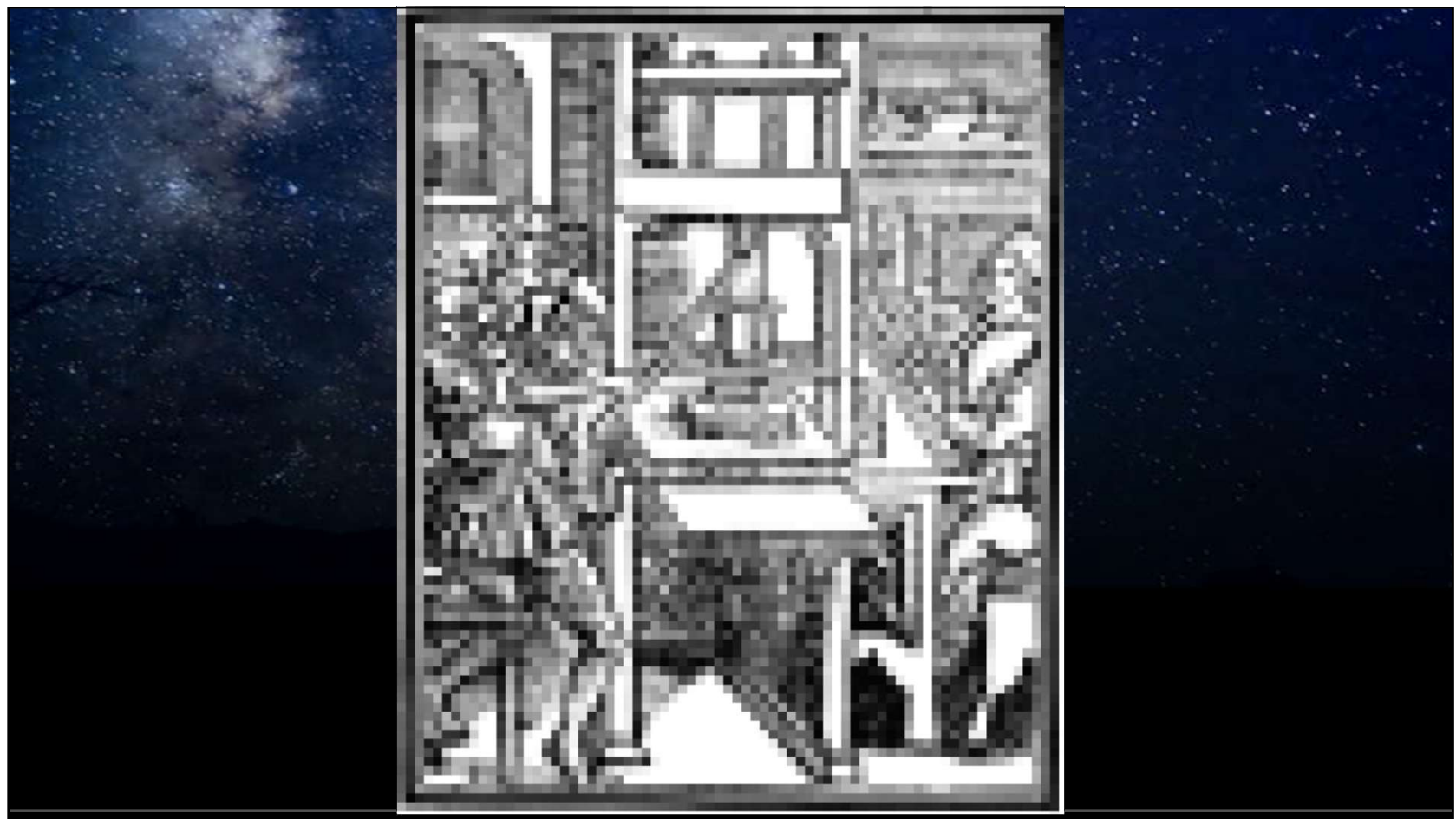
I am reminded of another time when a mix of the advance of technology and social upheaval led to another medium being born. Superman was an immigrant from another planet, with a name ending in -el; created by children of Jewish immigrants as World War II was brewing.



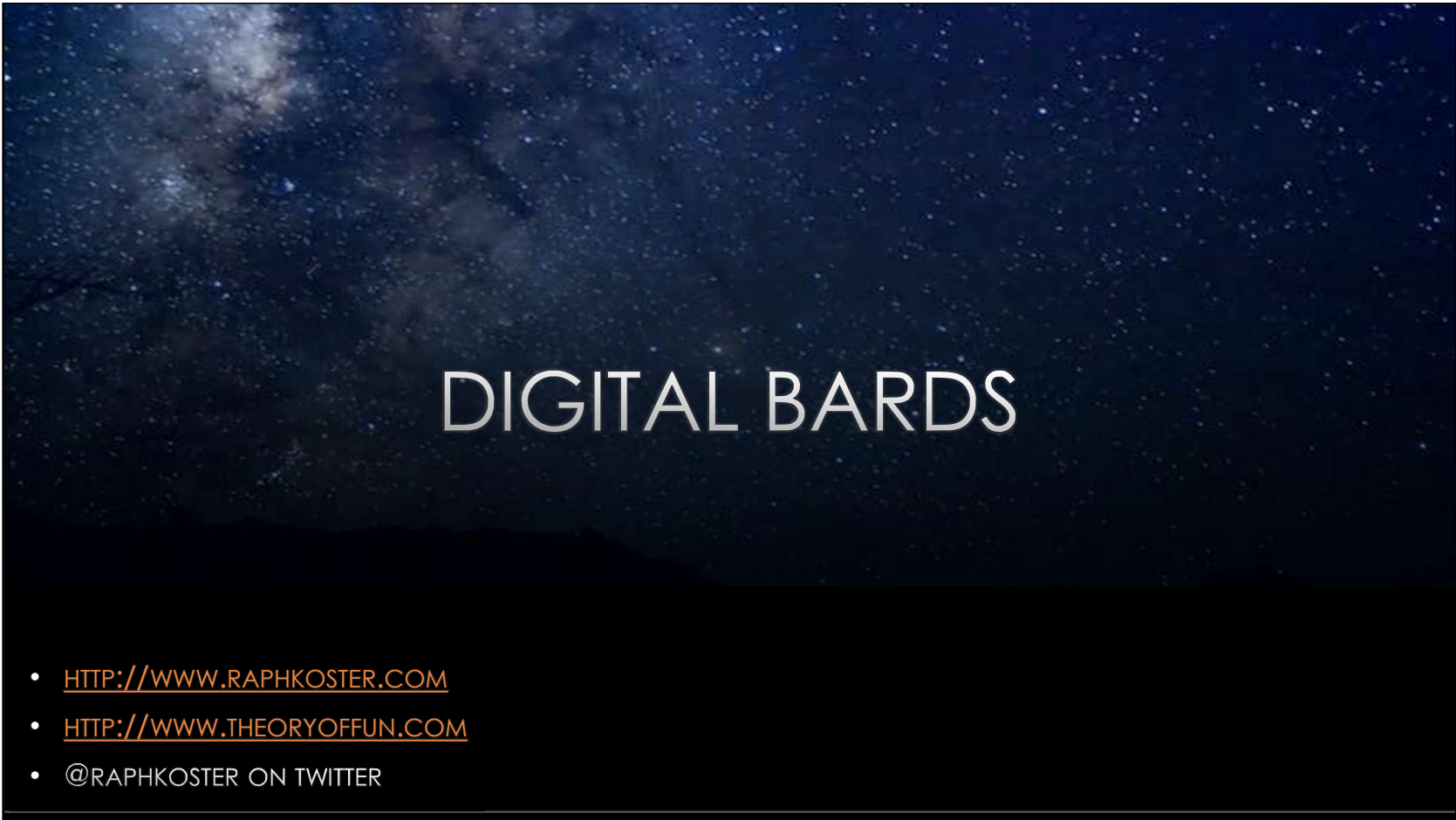
Wonder Woman was based on Margaret Sanger's niece, created by a polyamorous trio committed to woman's suffrage and feminism. We've all seen what the comic book turned into, with its far simpler storytelling structures...



Here we are now, facing a true upheaval in the nature of what a story even is, the kind of change that hasn't happened in half a millennium. It happens slowly when you live through it, doesn't it? But by a historical scale, it's fast.



This is your world now.



DIGITAL BARDS

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May you write it well.